Signing marks iwi’s ‘third base’

“Third Base” is how the signing of the treaty settlement for local iwi was described on Saturday, signifying decades of work in preparations and negotiations, but with still a lot of work to come.

“Today is our day at home,” said lead treaty negotiator Che Wilson., “but it is only third base.”

“We won’t be home until 40 working days after the third reading (of the enabling Act in Parliament), that we hope will be in 12-18 months time.”

He said the iwi needs to be patient and “not too eager to sneak a home run”.

The Deed of Settlement between Ngāti Rangi and the Crown that settles the historical Treaty of Waitangi claims of the iwi, was signed on Saturday at an emotional ceremony at Raketepauma Maraekakaho, witnessed by hundreds of whānau and friends.

“Today is significant for the people of Ngāti Rangi, and for all of New Zealand. I would like to acknowledge the enormous amount of work that has been achieved by the Central North Island tangata whenua and the government to get us to this point,” said Minister for Treaty Settlements, Andrew Little.

“Ngāti Rangi say that they have always been a friend of the Crown. Through this settlement the Crown aims to rebuild its relationship with Ngāti Rangi, and reinforce that it is based on mutual respect and honour.

“The Ngāti Rangi deed of settlement outlines a range of redress to be provided to the iwi, including a Crown acknowledgement and apology, cultural redress including a statutory recognition and governance arrangements for the Whangaehu River, and financial and commercial redress with a total value of $17 million.

“Legislation to enact the deed will be introduced to Parliament later this year,” says Andrew Little.

He said it was an “amazing and very spiritual” event, representing 178 years of hurt and being let down.

The deed of settlement, and a summary, is published at: www.govt.nz/treaty-settlement-documents/ngati-rangi/

Cultural redress includes special recognition of the connection between Ngāti Rangi, other local iwi, and Te Waiū o Te Ika (the Whangaehu River) and a new framework for governance over the river and its catchment.

Defence Force land at Waiouru will be vested in Ngāti Rangi who will then gift it back to the Crown for the people of New Zealand.

Three tribes launch environment trust

Three Ruapehu tribes formalised their role as guardians of the environment with the launch of a new Trust on Friday, at Pokaka, north of Horopito.

The environmental entity was launched by Uenuku Charitable Trust (UCT) for the tribes of Uenuku, Tamakana and Tamahaki, whose ancestral lands stretch west and southwest from the mountains of the Central Plateau.

The launch was attended by representatives from numerous organisations such as local councils and the Department of Conservation, along with the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations Andrew Little.

UCT thanked landowner John Dobson for hosting the event on his property, which is adjacent to the proposed Mainland Island ecological area (see separate story).

UCT chairman Aiden Gilbert said the Trust would develop and implement strategies to ecologically restore and protect ancestral lands and natural and historic resources.

“The vast majority of our tribal estate was taken by the Crown and is now in DOC hands and National Parks. Despite this, we have never lost sight of our kaitiakitanga (guardianship) obligations.

“The launch of Te Mano o te Whenua Tupua (“the ancestral heartland”), is part of an iwi-led, long-term strategy to provide a framework for our whānau and hapū to stand strong in their rohe and on their ancestral whenua. We have always been, and will continue to be.”

Releasing whio into the Makatote River on Friday are, Director-General of Department of Conservation Lou Sanson, Andrew Little, kaumatua Jim Edmonds, Te Kohatu Bauer (Raetihi School student and descendant of Uenuku, Tamakana and Tamahaki).
What's on round Ruapehu

17-18 March
Walaminus Rodeo

18 March
Racchis Fire Centenary

Easter Weekend
Het Arong

1 April
Racchis Gutbuster

16 May
Carrot Carnival

Tell us about your event. 06-385-8532, ed@ruapehubulletin.co.nz

St. Board & Bar
Cnr Ayr St & Goldfinch St, Ohakune
06-385-8433, tcbskiandboard.co.nz

TCB

Where to dine in the Ruapehu District

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3 Rimu St, Ohakune Junction
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LA PIZZERIA
6 Thames St, Ohakune Junction
Ph: 06 385 8558
Ohakune’s most famous pizza restaurant. For 30 years we have been cooking Ohakune’s best pizza. Come up and see us in the “Junction” at the end of the Old Coach Road and try one of our hot, tasty, handmade pizzas. Open for dinner, takeaway or dive in BYOW and fully licensed. Check us out online at: lapizzeria.co.nz

LEMONGRASS THAI RESTAURANT
As Alpine Motel, 7 Miro St, Ohakune
Ph: 06 385 8758
Ohakune’s Thai taste sensation! Authentic Thai cuisine in a relaxed, casual atmosphere. Fully licensed, dine in or takeaway. Open Monday to Saturday from 7pm. Full breakfast menu available daily 7am – 9am. Roasted Adaption Coffee.

OCR CAFE & RESTAURANT
2 Tyne St, Ohakune
Ph: 06 385 8221
Fully licensed country club with a fresh tasty menu at reasonable prices. Function room available. Gaming, pool, darts, snooker and TAB. Restaurant open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 5.30 – 9pm. All members and bona fide guests welcome.

SWEET PEA CAFE
19 Goldfinch St, (next to BNZ), Ohakune
Ph: 06 385 8112
Homemade freshly baked cabinet goodies and delicious menu to order from. Family friendly, with kids area and open fire. Open 7 days, 9am – 3pm

THE POWDERKEG
Bottom of the mountain road
Ph: 06 385 8464
The iconic Powderkeg remains Ohakune’s most popular venue for all ages, with 28 years’ commitment to fantastic food, friendly service and fun times. The Keg is the perfect place to meet friends for dinner, drinks, or a platter on the sunny balcony Matterhorn open 7–9.30am daily. Powderkeg open 3pm till late daily.

THE CYPRUS TREE
79 Clyde St, Ohakune
Ph: 06 385 8857
Contemporary café, bar and restaurant. Come and try our new small plates menu. Enjoy quality wine, craft beer, food and friendly service in our spacious, family friendly establishment. Fireside lounge and children’s play area, cozy indoors or perfect alfresco dining with spectacular mountain views. A great place for casual get togethers or special occasions.

UTOPIA CAFE/RESTAURANT
47 Clyde St, Ohakune
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To include your restaurant/bar/cafe in this guide, please contact the Ruapehu Bulletin on
06-385-8532 or email ads@ruapehubulletin.co.nz

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The party representing the Crown is welcomed onto the Marae on Saturday.

Treaty Settlements Minister Andrew Little (dubbed Anaru Iti at the ceremony) signs the Settlement Deed.

Mareikura Kaire, Ngapera Akapita, Nikoh Mareikura and child – just a few of the dozens out the back of the marae take a break from preparing for the hundreds of guests.

From Page 1

Celebrations continued on Sunday with their Ruapehu Whānau festival at Te Pae Tata in Ohakune. The Deed of Settlement doesn’t cover the Tongariro National Park, which will be negotiated separately with the Crown, Ngāti Rangi, other iwi and hapū.

Lead Treaty negotiator Che Wilson composed a special new waiata-ā-ringa (action song) for the signing, with Mt Ruapehu at centre stage in the waiata.

“Our affectionate term for Mt Ruapehu is Koro Ruapehu – so when you’re in the shadow of Mt Ruapehu (a) western world view will see a shadow as something dark,” he said.

“But you can only have shadow if there is light – so when we’re in his shadow, we’re in his protection."

Ngāti Rangi Trust chairman Shar Amner was also a Treaty negotiator, following in the footsteps of his grandfather Mark Gray.

Mr Amner said he’s happy his grandfather would be able to see the conclusion of the settlement.

“It’s … quite an emotional day as we reflect on the journey – this is the end of this part of the journey.”

“And our cultural identity was also taken at the same time from a confiscation perspective – and through this we’ve now been able to reinvigorate that.”

Trustee Gerrard Albert speaks to the Crown group. At left is Che Wilson and at right, kaumatua Mark Gray.

The gift from the Crown – a contemporary harakeke piece (at left) by Keita Tuhi and Kia Tomaana representing the vibrant colours of Ruapehu.

Andrew Little and Mark Gray hongi at the event. Photos: Robert Milne.
Three tribes launch environment trust

From Page 1

be, the guardians of our ancestral heartland.”

Mr Gilbert said the environmental trust is one of three entities being established to enable social and cultural revitalisation, commercial development and environmental protection.

“The work of these three pou, or pillars, is to enhance the social and cultural wellbeing of our people, and to protect and care for the land,” Mr Gilbert said.

“We don’t have to wait for claims settlement – the strategies will be independent of, but supported by, the outcome of settlement negotiations.”

UCT trustee Moana Ellis said the new entity results from aspirations of members of the three tribes as part of the pathway to settlement.

“There is a determination to nurture the biodiversity of our wild landscapes, natural habitats, and vulnerable taonga species, which are critical to our tribal identity,” Ms Ellis said.

“Our native forests are distinctive, with high flora and wildlife values. They are part of lands that are historically and culturally important, with centuries of occupation and use as the heartland of our people, including ancient walkways that supported our close connections with Taranaki and Taupo.

“Reconnecting with our whenua and its history will strengthen our distinctive cultural identity – another priority aspiration.”

The Trust is the mandated entity for Te Korowai o Wainuiārua (TKOW) Treaty claims negotiations with the Crown, with the aim to reach Agreement in Principle by August 2018.

Lead treaty negotiator for the Uenuku Charitable Trust Chris McKenzie said the trust would allow iwi members to leave an imprint on their environment.

“The central tribes of Te Korowai o Waimārāreta have had a particular focus over very many decades on the biodiversity of their region and the environment and largely because of government policy we’ve been spectators,” said Chris McKenzie.

“There’s lots of work to be done around here including eradication of pests and the protection and preservation of our very diverse environment. We have big plans to develop an inland island so that we can bring back species, which have suffered, like the hihi.

“We hope to continue our blue duck restoration and ensure we can protect kiwis.”

“Prior to 1865 virtually no non-Māori lived in this area but almost immediately from 1865 onwards the land was completely stripped from us by native land courts and all the wonderful native timbers were milled to build towns around New Zealand.

“When the land regenerated and the Crown found it was quite useless for anything, so later on they decided to transfer that land to national parks or reserves or national parks.”

Mr McKenzie hoped Mr Little would help solidify the iwi-crown relationship in terms of the protection of their lands.

“We want to impress upon him the work that we have done previously but we also want to impress upon him the on-going relationship that we will need to have with DOC given that 60 percent of our tribal area is conservation area or reserves or national parks.”

Andrew Little, Minister for Treaty Settlements, plants a tree to mark the launch of the Trust with help from Caroline Heta, an initial trustee for the Uenuku, Tamakana, Tamahaki environmental trust Te Mano o te Whenua Tupua.

Huge Horizons rates rise on the cards

Ruspehu District ratepayers are facing massive percentage rises in their local council rates, largely thanks to the recent property revaluations that have increased property values in relation to other parts of the Manawatu Whanganui Region (Horizons).

Horizons Regional Council’s draft Long Term Plan goes out for public consultation soon.

Ruspehu regional councillor Bruce Rollinson said the overall rate rise could be as high as 17% across the Ruspehu District, although because it varies between properties, as is usually the case, and would range from 4% up to 17%.

He said overall, Ruspehu District has seen a 12 to 13% increase in property capital values.

Rangitikei and Tararua District ratepayers are also facing larger rate increases than the regional average due to increasing land values, although not as high as Ruapehu’s.

Mr Rollinson said the rate increases due to the revaluation would vary between properties, as is usually the case, and would range from 4% up to 17%. He said he found one example that would see a 40% increase, although because it would add about 5.3 percentage points to the increase.

“It hits those properties [that have had big increases in land value] hard,” he said.

He said overall, Ruspehu District has seen a 12 to 13% increase in property capital values.

The central tribes of Te Korowai o Waimārāreta have had a particular focus over very many decades on the biodiversity of their region and the environment and largely because of government policy we’ve been spectators,” said Chris McKenzie.

Andrew Little, Minister for Treaty Settlements, plants a tree to mark the launch of the Trust with help from Caroline Heta, an initial trustee for the Uenuku, Tamakana, Tamahaki environmental trust Te Mano o te Whenua Tupua.
Inland island part of iwi plan

Uenuku Charitable Trust announced plans for a major biodiversity protection and ecological restoration project at their launch at Pokaka on Friday. The project would involve erecting a predator fence around approximately 200 hectares of land adjacent to the Mako-te Raka River. Dr John Junes, Landcare New Zealand, explained the advantages of the proposed fenced Island.

It would directly connect to a large native forest area; it has very high current wildlife values; and missing species can be put back; it is consistent with existing land use; it is next to SH4 and Tongariro National Park; it has Uenuku and European history.

The island would be part of the Mangani-o-te-Ao Sanctuary, which would create a core-halo model of pest management which has been described as the best way to protect New Zealand’s biodiversity for the foreseeable future.

The larger sanctuary – 2700 hectares – would run from near Erua down to close to Oruaiti, taking in much of the Mangani-o-te-Ao River.

The island's Friday's event ended with the release of four who (native blue ducks) on the Makotote River, below the railway viaduct.

National Park water short

A water conservation notice remains in force for National Park residents after work to replace the liner on the village’s water reservoir was not completed.

The next scheduled attempt to repair the liner will be today, Tuesday 13 March.

Ruapehu District Council advises that the water conservation notice will need to remain in place until Monday 19 March unless otherwise advised.

Ruapehu environmental manager Anne-Marie Westcott said that this was necessary to allow time for repair to the liner and then check systems and re-establish water treatment protocols so that optimising chlorine levels.

Waimarino weather

The temperatures and rainfall since the last published data as measured at the Ruapehu College Weather Station.

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Horizons rates rise

From Page 3

was of low capital value the actual dollar increase would be around $8.

Those with high capital value, such as farms, would go up by $80 to $100.

“Such a rate rise is going to be very difficult. I’m appealing to all other (regional) councillors to recognise the difficulties.”

“I’m fighting for Ruapehu and have some councillors’ support.”

But he said the rating system fits the legal requirements for setting rates so there may be “not a lot we can do”.

Smash Palace rescue on TV

A museum of vintage vehicles – a long-held ambition for Colin Fredericksen – has come to pass thanks to a reality television programme present. The Heritage Rescue team – led by Bigg Daddy – tackle a museum or historic site in need of help, and learn some fascinating stories of New Zealand’s history along the way. That’s the blurb for the Choice TV series.

The crew got stuck in at Horopito Motors last week, unveiling the finished product on Saturday, complete with old Model T Fords in the display featured in Smash Palace.

“Our team visits historical sites and museums around New Zealand, helps revitalise them and tell historical stories in the immediate area,” explains Brioni Gray from the production crew.

The episode is likely to air in September or October later this year.

Relay team wants your support

Waimarino “Carrat Munchers and Crunchers” want your money to support them in the Relay for Life fundraiser in Whanganui this weekend.

“We have a strong team of 17, from all ages, and walks of life,” says Waimarino Cancer Society co-ordinator Angel Joyce.

“Some of us have benefited from support given by Wanganui Cancer Society and a lot of us have family, or friends going through some forms of treatment or operations,” says Waimarino ‘Carrot Munchers and Crunchers’ want your money to support them in the relay.

And Reapyer

(Radio News)

(Third letter is added)

RDC replies

any final location was agreed in consultation with the Department of Conservation, Lions, the Department of Internal Affairs Culture and Heritage, Rail Heritage NZ and local iwi Ngati Rangitane.

As the Tangiwai site is a highly significant and sensitive site, Council took special care to consult widely and sensitively on the location of the new toilet block, especially with local iwi who are owners of the land.

Council believes the process was correct and the right people and organisations were involved.

Don Cameron, Ruapehu mayor

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Waimarino Rodeo 68 years on

Waimarino's first Rodeo was 15 March 1951 and included bull riding, saddle bronc and bareback riding and at the end of the day a dance was held.

"This is our 68th Rodeo and we hope to see you all there," invites today’s Waimarino Rodeo Committee.

The first rodeo followed the first AGM held on 16 November 1950.

The club was formed by several local gentlemen who believed that the area could benefit from this event. There were 28 members and the gate fee was 6 pence – equivalent to 5 cents today.

The first event was held in the show arena with the yards at the south end. The men then formed an internal fence half the size of the main arena for the rodeo.

Prize money was: 1st 1/5/0 (1 pound 5 shillings, or $2.50) today it is $450.

They included an event for old timers age over 50.

The club became incorporated in 1956 and hosted the New Zealand National Finals in 1958.

Turn to Page 6
Steer wrestling - an event born out of ranchers gathering to test their stock work skills.

Waimarino Rodeo
68 years on

From Page 5

The club owned 60 horses and in 1954 sent 51 to the Egmont Wanganui Rodeo, at a cost of $1 pound each in hire.
In 1964 the club decided to go to include calf roping.
In 1966 the Club bought the mill paddock, which is opposite the Kui & Griffiths yard.
In 1971 barrel racing was included.
In 1972 the 2nd Division was included in the day’s proceedings.
In 1986, due to new rules from the national body, the grounds had to be worked up.
The club decided to build a special arena where it is today.
Many man and woman hours were put in to have this ready for the next Rodeo.
All the old yards were dismantled and materials were sold off to help pay for the new ones.

In 1990 it was decided to try and hold a two-day rodeo with open events one day and 2nd division on the second day.
In 1996 it was decided to hold two days but as two separate rodeos, with all events both days. This went well and the Club is still doing this today.
Over the years the Club has had three families who are still involved now and were founding members.
The Windle family, who have provided three presidents - Harold, Don and today Shane, with daughter Samara on the committee.
The Hall family – Doug (Taku), Doug, Min and Neihana.
The Maclean family – Alec and Russell Snr, Douglas, Tony and Matty.

“We once again have big entries so come and enjoy a fun-packed day,”
invites the Waimarino Rodeo Committee.
40th Shears for the Waimarino

This year’s Waimarino Shears is the 40th anniversary event for the competition, having started in 1978. The event has hosted dozens of top name shearers over the years including world champions such as the legendary David Fagan and Cam Ferguson as well as John Kirkpatrick and Rowland Smith. Past highlights have included the Kiwi team beating a visiting UK team in 2011.

The event is a full-on show for spectators right from the start, kicking off at 8.30am sharp with the novice event.

“We’d love to see more locals having a go,” says organiser Ronald Frew, who added that there are several categories available. Organisers will provide lunch for all competitors at the Shears and they invite all their sponsors to attend and join them for lunch.

“The Waimarino Shears are now part of a circuit event for the Te Kuiti Shears so we’re expecting a great show.”

“We are looking at an action packed day with plenty of shearing, local rodeo rides and a range of food stalls and the presence of the local market day. Free entry for everyone – come and enjoy,” says Ronald Frew.


Shearer Rowland Smith has won the Waimarino Shears title year after year. Photos: Fran Frew.

Shearers are a hardy breed...

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RUapeHU BuLLeTiN 13 March 2018 • 7
Ohakune dairy farmer 2nd in awards

Ohakune dairy farmer Lisa Hicks has scooped over $6000 in prizes, including second-place in the share farmer category in the recent 2018 Manuwatu Dairy Industry Awards.

Lisa has entered the Dairy Industry Awards nine times previously and believes the Awards provide a good platform to review her own progress in business.

“When there’s that competitive edge that kicks in and drives you towards success,” said Lisa Hicks.

“I enjoy working towards getting better at the farm visits, the collation of information and the presentations every year.”

“I am passionate about the dairy industry and gain huge satisfaction from the business. It’s important to have that passion to support continual learning and subsequent improvement,” says Lisa.

Since entering the dairy industry in her mid-40s, Lisa has progressed through the industry and is now in her fourth and final season of contract milking 620 cows at one of Aitihau Whanganui Incorporation’s farms at Ohakune.

She moves to a larger contract position for the 2018-19 season, and the 51 year-old aims to generate an increased dairy operating margin to support her business and personal needs.

Lisa places huge value on people within the business and aims for complementary outcomes between employers and staff and supports their personal development in the dairy industry.

“We often employ people from multi-cultural backgrounds, which can provide a good challenge to standard management practices on farm,” she says.

“This helps us grow as employers and makes us think outside of the square to ensure a fully functioning dairy。”

Dairy awards winner Lisa Hicks, at back centre, with staff that she says have helped her to achieve, from left, Alvin Dalagan, Lisa, Deejay Canceran, Front: Fraser Barker, Darryl Galletto and Sony Chakola.

Lisa Hicks awards were: DairyNZ Human Resources Award; Ecolub Farm Leadership Award – Lisa Hicks; Honda Farm Safety and Health Award.

Youth councillors sworn in

Ruapehu’s 2018 Youth Council ambassadors were sworn in in front of whanau and friends at special ceremonies held in Taumarunui and Ohakune last week.

The award winning Ruapehu Youth Council is made up of two groups: the Taumarumuri-Ohura Youth Ambassadors (TOYA) and the Waimarino-Waiouru Youth Ambassadors (WWYA) with each group working to represent youth from within the district and, in particular, youth from their own communities.

The 2018 WWYA are: Aaliyah Dennison, Ashley Akapita, Dalton Jordan, Emma Burnard, Janine Francois, Josra von Pein, Justice Dennison, Mac Madsen, Sapphire Mapp, Sophie Coller, Tayla Goff and Tiere Rapana.

The 2018 TOYA are: Anna Seby, Daisy Tumutanu, Dylin Dobs, Hannah-May Johnston, Huia Rauhina, Jesse Gurrick, Jindhi Bhuller, Kushia Sienonek and Shanee Pon.

Ruapehu Youth Council co-ordinator Samantha Arthur-Curtis said she was really impressed with the calibre of young people who had put themselves forward.

“They all demonstrate a genuine passion for their community and a desire to make a real difference to the lives of Ruapehu youth,” she said.

“I’m sure they will continue the fantastic legacy of achievement the earlier youth ambassadors have delivered, which has included winning a ‘Youth Group’ category award as part of the national Youth Week awards in 2016.”

In addition to representing youth views with Council and Community Boards the youth ambassadors will be taking part in events such as Festival for the Future while developing leadership and other skills.

Ms Arthur-Curtis said they have a big work programme ahead including undertaking project management training, creating an anti-bullying campaign, working with other community groups to carry out beautification projects in Ruapehu towns, and fund raising for the local youth fund.

She said that anyone interested in the work of the Ruapehu Youth Council and how they can get involved can find more information on Council’s website ruapehucdc.govt.nz.

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Hohotaka 1B1 Block
Saturday 17 March 2018
at Senior Citizens Hall Taumarunui
Lunch at 12.30pm
Hui starts at 1.30pm
1. Mihi/karaka
2. Minutes of previous meeting
3. Trustees’ Report
5. Review of Trust
6. Vary Trust Order
6.1 Clause 4 apply to Court for approval
if trustee is employed in any capacity
whatsoever by the Trust
6.2 Add a Clause 7(a)(iv) accept proxies
to allow participation and add to
quorum of owners’ general or special
meeting convened from time to time as
trustees arrange, provided that there is
one proxy per person and will only be
counted as one in event proxy holder
has more than one proxy and that
no trustee is to be a holder of a proxy.
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The compliance function is at the forefront of council operations being responsible for working with
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- Ensuring compliance with the Fencing of Swimming Pools & other Acts
- Parking and vehicle WOF and registration patrols
- Litter offences and fly-tipping
- Noise Control
- Enforcing council bylaws, policies and the District Plan
As such the Compliance Officer position is one of the most varied, interesting and at times
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APPLICATIONS CLOSE THURSDAY 29 MARCH 2018
Ruapehu wins pre-season
McCarthy’s Ruapehu played a pre-season game against Taumarunui Country at Taumarunui on Saturday, winning 6-48. Pictured is Kahi Eloro-Green clearing the ball from Gabriel Hakarala, while Keith Donald, Jamie Hughes and Te U Haki Hakarala are protecting the grounded player. The first game of the season will be against Ratana at Marton next Saturday.

THERE’S ONLY ONE THING WORSE than being talked about ... is not being talked about! If you’re not in the Bulletin, are they talking about you? Call us today, 06-385-6032 – we’ll get them talking.

Classifieds

Public notices

Raeiti Fire Centennial
The Waimarino Community invites you to attend the Centennial Commemoration of the Great Fire of Raeiti
Parade/queuing at Pioneer Gates, Raeiti Lawn Cemetery, SH4, Raeiti Sunday 18 March 2018 at 12.30pm

Water and electricity for the Buster
They say that water and electricity don’t mix, but organisers of the Raeiti Gutterfest event are finding they “work together quite nicely”.

“They’ve been so nice, very patient, I can’t praise them highly enough,” said Rosie Heath, the first female home last year, enjoying the Gutbuster.

Situations vacant

Electricalian required for Tangiwai Sawmill
Night shift Monday to Thursday only

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Raetihi fire NZ’s worst

By Stanley Fraser

The Raetihi Fire was one of the worst conflagrations in New Zealand history due to its size and devastation on a community. The 18th and 19th March 1918 will forever leave a dark day legacy in our community.

It was typical to have large bush burn-offs during this time of the year as settlers prepared to clear the acres of stumps and other debris around the country. One area that was a potential fire source was located at Maitai Flat, near where Mangapurua Road leaves the Ruatiti Road.

Further south in the Wairarapa County residents were not worried about the massive plumes of smoke with a wind direction heading westward. Little did anyone imagine that the wind would change direction and increase to a great velocity, reaching up to 120-140 km per hour. Everyone in the district was impacted by the fire and there are dozens of memorials and accounts that have been passed down generations.

Tragedy in the Mangaeturoa Valley

Unfortunately three people perished in an attempt to escape from the fire. Joseph M Akersten was originally from the South Island and came to Raetihi taking up the position of farm manager for Scott & Connor’s Tamapara Station on Mangaeturoa South Road.

The family were alerted by the intensity of the winds, when iron tore from the roof waking all inside. Around 4am the fire closed in. Akersten fled the dwelling taking his partner Edith Harle and infant daughter Edna Harle and farm hand Sydney Scott. They headed for an open clearing in the light bush.

Finding themselves surrounded by fire, Joseph made the decision to head for the Mangaeturoa Stream. Racing about two chains from the house he collapsed, exhausted. Attempts by Sydney and Edith to arouse him failed. Edith refused to leave Joseph’s side, so Sydney, unable to save them, ran for his life in a different direction, where he climbed a tree and clung on for over an hour while the fire roared past him.

Sydney Scott returned with a police search party to locate the missing family. Edith was found lying over Joseph in an attempt to cover him, with baby Edna lying next to a log nearby. An impromptu stretcher was made out of corrugated iron to retrieve their bodies.

Akersten family being carried across a ravine over an improvised bridge. Source: Auckland Star

At the junction of the Tobunda and Valley Roads was Wilson’s Rangatana Timber Company’s Horopito Mill. The mill was lost along with large quantities of timber by the ‘flames of hades’. One account from the Auckland Star details how the Makotuku School nearby was saved.

“One thrilling incident stands out by itself – a splendid story of how three men and a boy fought the flames for five hours with twelve lives at stake. The scene was the Makotuku School, which stands on half an acre of clear ground. When the teacher’s residence nearby was engulfed in the fire the teacher (Mr PJ McCann) and his wife and child made for the school, where they were joined by Mr Curtis (a mill employee), his wife and son, a sturdy boy of about 16 years.

The others of the party were Mr Rix (another mill employee), and his seven young children. The women and children were put inside the schoolhouse, and the three men and the boy, with a bucket, and the school tank for a water supply, commenced to fight against terrible odds. All around the school fallen timber was burning, but their great task was a wall of leaping flame driven by the gale. Sheltering behind the building, the four fought for their lives. So great was the heat that the building steamed. Three times it became ignited, but each, time, by desperate efforts, they just won. It was not until the battle had gone on for five hours that the danger was over.”

Source: Papers Past: Auckland Star

Brass band for fire event

A Ratana brass band from Matamata will play at the service to commemorate the Raetihi Great Fire of 1918 on Sunday, advises Raetihi Promotions.

The service is at 12.30pm at Pioneer Gate and will include the unveiling of a plaque and flowers to be put on the graves of the three people who died as a result of the fire, at Mangaeturoa South Road.

A parade will assemble in Ward Street and then head to Seddon Street to the museum at 1.15pm. The band will lead followed by fire engines and vintage cars. There will be speeches at the museum and new large history boards featuring photos and information on the fire will be on display.

There is one survivor from the day of the fire – Frank Taylor who now lives in care in Taupe – but he is too frail to travel to Raetihi for the event, says Geoff Anderson from Raetihi Promotions.

Architectural tour to the wild west

Architects from around the Taranaki-Whanganui Manawatu region gathered in the Ruapehu District recently, taking in a variety of sites including Mellonsfolly Ranch – the mock wild west town.

Nine designers visited the Powderhorn Chateau, the Ohakune yurts, the Ruapehu Building designers enjoyed a visit to Mellonsfolly Ranch recently. Architectural tour to the wild west

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