

BRIEFLY

Firing up

Te Awamutu Rowing Club is hoping to extend its current base at Lake Ngaroto, so a fundraising campaign has been started.

First fundraiser is firewood from a member's farm at Te Pahu. The wood is split and sold for collection at \$80 per cubic metre, with a free bag of pinecones per cube.

For more details or to order some firewood, phone Shane Swinerd (ph 0275 459975).

Blooming

Local Team 7 florist Iona van der Pasch has been nominated for outstanding florist in the New Zealand Wedding Industry Awards.

The annual awards shine the spotlight on talented individuals, small to medium entrepreneurs and larger well established and highly regarded businesses.

Entries for the awards close on February 28, followed by naming of finalists, before the awards dinner on April 1 in Rotorua.

RNZ Champs

After three days of heats, finals began at the 2016 Bankstream New Zealand Rowing Championships at Lake Karapiro today.

Rowing New Zealand selectors are expecting some world-class performances.

Nine crews have already qualified for Rio as part of the largest New Zealand Olympic rowing team to date, with the possibility of more crews qualifying at the final Olympic Qualification Regatta.

The Champs also provide selectors with an opportunity to spot talented rowers for the elite and under-23 trials.

Flagging vote

At least one local will be voting to retain the current flag in the referendum — the alternative flying at Council HQ was cut down and trampled yesterday.

Memorial to patients unveiling Saturday

This Saturday marks a major step forward in recognising 500 former Tokanui Psychiatric Hospital patients buried in unmarked graves near the facility between 1914 and 1964.

A memorial wall has been constructed on the site, and it will be unveiled at a service at 10am.

The service follows a dawn event where Maniapoto iwi will visit the urupa, unveil a pou and bless the wall.

The 10am service at the site will include speakers Mayor Jim Mylchreest, representatives from the Ministry of Health, blessings from church representatives and an address by Tokanui Cemetery Committee member Mark Reinsfield.

Wreaths will be laid on behalf of various organisations.

The project began in earnest a couple of years ago when Hamilton man Maurice Zinsli decided to start a genealogy project.

He wanted to find out about his ancestry for his kids.

His cousin Bernice Smith from Tauranga had started some research, and it was through her findings that he discovered he had an aunt buried in the Tokanui Hospital Cemetery.

Mr Zinsli decided to visit her grave, and with another cousin, Brian Zinsli, tracked down the cemetery which was in a paddock on the AgResearch farm.

At the corner of the site stood a stone marking the cemetery and a plaque recording the dates — the paddock itself was nearly waist high in grass.

"We walked around the paddock — it was so sad," explained Mr Zinsli.

The men scoured the ground trying to find Mr Zinsli's aunt's grave and came across the only headstone in the entire cemetery — that of Bridget Nolan, who died in 1939.

Mr Zinsli believed all those buried in the cemetery deserved better and started to spread the



JAMES R. Hill funeral home manager Mark Reinsfield at the memorial site following concrete and groundwork. TC180216SP01A

story.

Hamilton funeral home manager and genealogist Mark Reinsfield of James R. Hill saw Mr Zinsli's story in the newspaper.

He and his staff talked about doing something for the cemetery and an idea took hold.

Mr Reinsfield did some research, and following a talk with head office, funds were made available to put an eight-metre memorial wall in place.

The wall is solid granite and will have the names of every person buried on the site engraved on it, with space for a seat and flagpole on an anchor-shaped base of polished concrete.

A committee of interested parties came together to make plans for the cemetery.

Ground-penetrating radar was used to find where people were buried, and with the help of genealogist Anna Purgar they were able to divide the names into those buried in the Anglican, Catholic and non-conformists plots.

The names will be recorded on different sections of the wall according to their burial plot, with a separate RSA section for war veterans.

There are blank spaces on the wall for names to be added as more people are identified.

Ms Purgar spent two years

researching the names and stories of those buried on the site, comparing information from the hospital with papers past birth, death and marriage notices and the death register from the genealogist society from Te Kuiti, written just after the hospital closed.

"It needed to be done, the information was so conflicting so I thought these people in the cemetery deserve better," she said.

"It was a matter of trying to bring all three sources together and trying to get the information right."

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