



Picton Rail & Sail¹
on the Picton Foreshore
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NEWSLETTER August 2021 *Brian Morris, Editor 0211922936*



It was certainly a good blow and downpour during the middle weekend of the July school holidays. We are thankful that the station, the pool and the grounds suffered nothing more than a good soaking, and any debris that was blown down and around, was readily cleared up by the train crews who managed to keep operations going - when it wasn't raining! We send our very best wishes to families, friends

***The Waitohi Stream in full (over) flow** and colleagues on the Coast who have been so badly affected, and who have months of hard yakka ahead to return their lives, homes and town back to normal*

The Rail & Sail RSA Quiz Teams (when enough people show up, we form two teams, named *Charlotte* and *Endeavour*) have competed valiantly every week, and have won virtually every position from last, through to second (a couple of times!) and at last, up where we belong, first! With the new school term having started, and a bit more routine in people's lives, we're hoping for more settled and more populous line-ups for the remainder of the winter season. **Brian Morris** has been the best anchorman ever!



The mid-winter Christmas dinner at the RSA is on Saturday 14 August, from 5.30 pm (\$25 per person, desserts \$5.00). So far, 18 people plan to come along, including three colleagues from the Canterbury Society of Model Engineers, who are visiting MAMS in

¹ Picton Society of Model Engineers Incorporated

Blenheim that weekend. We send a copy of our newsletters to fellow Societies throughout New Zealand, and that's how they learned about our social events, and asked if they could join us for this one! They are also going to visit the station around 4pm on the Saturday to have a look at our set-up, so do join us there (and at the dinner) if you would like to meet them

Our Committee sends a copy of our meeting agendas and minutes to each of you every month, so you stay connected with what is happening and what is coming up. You'll note from July's minutes that **Paul Van Der Werff** is



doing a lot of work on our collective behalf over the next few weeks, so please contact him if you think you can lend him a hand with any of the tasks he has on his plate



*And you will have noticed how beautifully spruced up and added to the model train set-up has been – we have **Graham Ashford** to thank for that! More thanks to Graham for taking the time to chat with the MDC parking warden last weekend when s/he took a*

worrying interest in our train crew's parked cars. We are still waiting for the MDC to return our dedicated car park to us; but as per Graham's suggestion, we've put a couple of laminated notices in the station that you can tuck under your windscreen wiper when you're on a shift, until our parking entitlement is reinstated



Another item you should note is our social events' calendar (posted in the station and regularly updated in our minutes). Those who made it to the Tuesday 13 July lunch at The Crow will warmly remember not only a delicious meal and good company, but also a memorable poem declaimed by **Brian Morris**, and **Quentin Doig's** gracious thanks to all members who work so hard to keep the Society's wheels

turning. A special thank you is due to Vice-President **Carol Morris**, who has been doing the banking during our Treasurer **John Aldridge**'s absence. He and **Jill** were greeted *in absentia*, as a result of having a slightly longer Australian holiday than intended. We look forward to welcoming them back!

Editor's pick

Kiwis currently stuck in Australia probably wish they had the skills of history's most famous magician and escape artist - Harry Houdini. Born Ehrich Weiss in Budapest in 1874, his family emigrated from Europe, and Weiss senior became the Rabbi for a synagogue in America's mid-west. German only was spoken at home, so Harry's English was basic, but this did not stop him learning magic tricks with cards and coins. He created daring escape routines using a variety of constraints (eg police handcuffs) and containers (locked and rivetted wood crates and steel boxes), becoming the world's best-known magician and escapologist

Travelling through America, Britain, Europe and even Australia by train and ship (he never slept well, no matter how luxurious his rail and sail accommodations were), he became a sensation, and worked hard to "up the ante" with every show

His most daring escape was from being strapped into a strait-jacket, bound with chains, padlocked, sealed inside a locked trunk and lowered into New York Harbour, and later into London's Thames, witnessed by crowds of up to 20,000 people



Mass adoration, packed theatres and publishing many (ghost-written) books resulted in great wealth. Houdini was devoted to his mother Cecilia and wife Bess. They both studied spiritualism, attending scores of seances - with the aim of proving the activity and its practitioners - spiritualists, mediums and mystics - were totally fake. The couple made a secret pact - whoever died first would send a message

from ‘the other side’ using the code words “Rosabelle” and “Believe”. Of course no seancer knew this, and after Houdini died, Bess remained vigilant, waiting for his message. It never came

Even though immensely fit, the rigours of performing three physically-demanding shows a day for years took its toll, and his health began to fail. Even so, the manner and timing of his death was as unexpected and as bizarre as many aspects of his life. Taking on his boast that he was so muscle-bound that blows would just bounce off him, a cynical punter, Gordon Whitehead, punched him in the stomach without warning. Houdini’s appendix ruptured; he died of peritonitis in 1926, on Hallowe’en – the night when restless spirits roam the earth, to the terror of the living



President’s call

Long-time members will remember **Patrick Robinson**, a Society and Committee stalwart for more years than he probably cares to remember. Among many other accomplishments, he has most recently been the inspirer, designer, initial constructor and overall “driver” of the new electric motor project, hopefully coming to fruition by October. But now Patrick’s laying down the tools to pay some well-deserved attention to his health. I can’t thank him enough for his support, guidance and engineering nous, and while this will be greatly missed, who can begrudge him, and Paula, a restful retirement from their immense contribution to the Society

Society contacts

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