

## Media Release

15<sup>th</sup> December 2015

### **Original French Marble clock linked to the Brunnerton Mine disaster has been donated to Shantytown Heritage Park**

This French marble clock was a prize from a fundraiser for New Zealand's worst mining accident has been bestowed upon Shantytown Heritage Park on the South Island's West Coast.

A total of 65 miners, almost half the mines' workforce, were killed when the Brunnerton Mine, near present day Dobson 10 kilometres inland from Greymouth, exploded at 9.30am on 26th March 1896.

Richard Seddon, the New Zealand Premier and West Coast representative in Parliament at the time, was visiting Hokitika the day the explosion occurred. He quickly made his way to Brunner. The next day a Charitable Relief Appeal was launched.

Relief funds were set up by many organisations across New Zealand including the Grand Athletic Fund organised by the Auckland and North Shore Amateur Athletic and Cycle Clubs. On 6th April 1896 they advertised in the Auckland Star advising people of the event. Running and Cycling seemed to be the order of the day with events such as 300 Yards Handicap (for shop assistants), Two-Mile Walking Handicap, Five-Mile Bicycle Handicap and a Chinamen's Race. Entertainment included an Indian Club Swinging Demonstration by the Maori Boys of St Stephens Native School.

One of the prizes in the 120 Hurdles Handicap was a marble clock. This was won by W H Martyn and presented by J Prince to the winner.

Earlier this year Shantytown was contacted by Allan Haslem regarding the donation of a clock to us. He felt it should be returned to the West Coast as it had a strong local connection.

The clock was owned by an elderly gentleman who rented a house owned by Allan's father. When the gentleman shifted from the house he left the clock behind as he felt it was of no use to him.

Allan's family undertook some restoration work on the clock to get it back in working order. After years in the family, Allan decided to return the clock to the West Coast if he could. Several years ago he approached a couple of museums to see if they were interested but to no avail. By luck, a colleague who visited Shantytown Heritage Park in a business capacity suggested for him to get in touch with us. After a meeting with Allan, the clock was sent down from Auckland.

When Shantytown received the clock it was not in working order, so it was taken to Ian Tennent for a check over. Ian managed to get the clock ticking again and it is keeping reasonable time. It was fortuitous that the keys were still with the clock.

The clock is Marble with a French movement. A label from CT Reardon Watchmaker and Jeweller, Karangahape Road, Auckland suggests they were most probably the jeweller who sold the clock and did the engraving on the face.

The engraving reads: "Brunnerton Disaster Relief Fund 15-4-96, 120 Hurdles Handicap, Won by W.H. Martin, Presented by J Prince".

Shantytown Heritage Park plans to display the clock to the public in Coronation Hall where Richard Seddon gave many of his speeches. Marsden Valley Education Centre at Shantytown also incorporates a Brunner Programme that includes a site visit to the Brunner Mine and the clock will be another item that can be used as a teaching aide about this terribly tragic chapter in New Zealand's mining history.



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