

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2008-09

Ladies and Gentlemen, Committee members, and special guest Allan Dippie - welcome to the Cromwell Promotion Group's Annual General Meeting. Cromwell's last year has been variable as the effects of the global downturn starts to hit our small community. In a so called recession, it is usual for Cromwell to absorb the main effects as we live off Queenstown and Wanaka to some degree – but this time there have been major upheavals in Queenstown that have had carry-down impacts on Cromwell. The Group has also had a frustrating year that has been marked by a lack of funding to achieve some of its aims.

All is not that bad though with local real estate agents reporting a recent 'rally' in sales at a traditionally slow time in the market. Looking at Council statistics also indicates that the Cromwell Ward is steadily growing with the continuing increase in the number of 'ratepayers'. Over the last five years the number of ratepayers has shown constant growth with an increase of 1509 rateable properties (and potential residents) as follows:

2004 – 9,607; 2005 – 9,970; 2006 – 10,359; 2007 – 10,706; 2008 – 11,116.

On the other hand we have seen a drop in the amount of building activity from the Council and Cromwell Ward record highs of last year. In 2007-08 Cromwell had \$59M out of the Central Otago total of \$97M (60%) – while in 2008-09 we had \$42M out of Central Otago total of \$86M (49%). There has also been a sharp decrease in resource consent applications over the whole district so activity on all indicator 'fronts' has slowed down. Signs of the slowing down can also be seen locally where Fibrecon, one of Cromwell's first industries (apart from transport) is closing; and some four shops are 'empty' in The Mall.

Enough of the sometimes depressing global picture – let's look at the Group's activities over the last year. We have two subcommittees dealing with specific items:

Firstly, the Cromwell Town Centre Committee, who look after our activities in The Mall and Sargood areas, with Graeme McDowell as Chairperson. Following adverse criticism in Christmas 2007, an integrated scheme of Christmas Decorations was installed in The Mall in 2008. Although largely appreciated, they came with a cost of over \$41,100 with Council and Pub Charity making a welcome contribution of \$10,000 each. This left the Group making up the balance of some \$21,000 – a figure not allowed for in the annual budget and a substantial amount for our Group. Although happy with the work undertaken, the costs caused severe financial restrictions on all the Group's activities following the Christmas period, and this unhealthy situation is expected to continue well into this coming year.

The subcommittee also looks after other items in the Town Centre including Mall surveillance system (with a maintenance contract to Chubb at \$1040 per annum); Mall sound system; promotion/advertising; and i-Site television. All this costs the Group and I feel that a greater contribution should be made by Council with these Mall-orientated costs. Recently Gary Anderson has set up a 'wireless broadband' connection to parts of the Mall; and investigations are being made to set-up a 'Cromwell Live Webcam' operation located on the terraces above SH6/SH8b intersection. The Group has a policy of not commenting on local body affairs but does encourage individuals to be involved. One substantial submission was made by Gary Anderson on the Council's LTCCP and discussed various concerns about the Town Centre development. Of major concern were potential effects on The Mall with a shift of location of the i-Site, and the poor image of the town created by the sub-standard public toilets.

Secondly, the Tourism Cromwell subcommittee, under Chairperson Glen Christensen, has continued their efforts as the Group's 'commercial arm' and have been involved with updating their website, various district clean-ups, a fishing competition, and input on various Community Plans.

The Group's main activities for the 2008-09 year have been:

- Cromwell Summer Series. Last season saw a record 2042 participants in our six event series. There were record numbers for the Half Marathon (373) and Bannockburn Classic MTB (723) and, on the other hand, a record low 82 for the Carricktown Crusher. I wish to thank all the people who make these events possible and especially our volunteer staff (and especially the timing crew), and Bill Godsall from Sport Central. Thanks also go to all the sponsors and especially New Zealand Community Trust and Outside Sports. This season we will be organising a similar series however we are also continuing to investigate a suitable Bendigo MTB event.
- Last December the 'National Cherry Stone Spitting Contest', was held in The Mall rather than Old Cromwell because of construction work on the Village Green. A new NZ Champion was found in Michael Bassett from Wanaka, who will represent us in Manjimup, Perth next December.
- Pub Charity and the Cromwell Town & Country Club again sponsored our annual 'Fireworks Display' that was held in November, at Melmore Marina. Because of a shortfall in funding the Group made up the deficit for what is usually a self-funding event. However, because of present funding constraints the fate of this event for the coming November is under serious consideration at this stage.
- The Canterbury A&P Show display and sponsorship at the New Zealand Trotting Cup in November continues to be the Group's major requirement in terms of volunteer input. Although using a 'worn' format, the Group, in conjunction with other Central Otago promotion groups, has a worthwhile presence at Christchurch. All that would not happen if not for our volunteers and my thanks go out to all of them.
- Local Activity Support is how the Group assists small local organisations with advertising and promotion of their events that may attract people into the town. Grants or assistance were given to the following organisations: Old Cromwell Town, Cromwell Race Day, Cromwell Harness Racing Club, Otago Polytechnic (Young Viticulturist Contest), National Gold Panning Contest, Cromwell Patchwork Group, Central Otago Farmers Market, Cromwell Arts & Crafts Easter Exhibition, Cromwell-Queenstown Cycle Tour, Sport Central, Central Otago Vintage Car Club, Lake Dunstan Power Boat Club, Cromwell Toy Library Santas Grotto, Central Otago Model Railway Club, Lowburn Collie Dog Club, Cromwell Motorcross Club and Southland Ford Car Club.
- Advertising opportunities such as the 'A Weekend in Cromwell' article in the March 2009 North & South magazine.
- 'Light up Cromwell' competition held over the Christmas period. Thanks go to Patrina Hedley for organising this event.

Last year I talked about the creation of a 'tourist oriented strip' between Dead Man's Point Bridge and Goldfields Mining Centre and noted that progress had been slow. This year has seen some action with several developments in the Sargood area such as Mitre 10 and Nichols Lifestyle Centre. I am sure Allan will take this opportunity to inform you all about Nichols in a few minutes; as well as the Cromwell Motorsport Park that has obtained Resource Consent to develop a training and race track adjacent to the Central Speedway site.

Other development along this strip include the possible purchase of Goldfields Mining Centre by Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust; and the establishment of a 'New Zealand Heritage Farm Show and Museum' at the Cromwell Racecourse Reserve. The Goldfields site is iconic – being on the State highway between Christchurch and Queenstown and specialising in heritage, gold and Chinese. There is huge potential for this site in the future. The Heritage Farm Show has yet to obtain necessary approvals, but Lester Rowntree is proposing a 50m x 70m building with a show area seating 400 persons. Lester is proposing a 365 day a year farm show that would better any in the world. This is a huge enterprise and will have many beneficial effects for Cromwell, and we wish him all the best in the planning and establishment phases.

The Group is also looking towards the lucrative Chinese market that is expected to top 50 million trips in 2009, with 10% travelling outside Asia. In 1992 we set up a 'Chinese New Year' display at Waterfall Park, Arrowtown and, more recently, have been working on using that original work to supplement the website. Cromwell has a huge, well recorded historical resource in the Chinese and we should use it with opportunities such as the reconstruction of Cromwell's Chinatown adjacent to the War Memorial and the possibilities of exhibiting the Leo Mangos Chinese artefact collection as part of Council's Memorial Hall redevelopment programme. A reconstruction of Cromwell Chinatown will, combined with the Chinese display at Goldfields, and Old Cromwell Town, form a further attraction for the proposed 'Chinese Heritage Gold-mining Trail' extending from Dunedin to Queenstown.

The Group has also been involved with:

- The Bannockburn Bridge to Ripponvale walking track was constructed last year and has not been completed or officially opened due to lack of funding. Some further planning work has been undertaken in readiness to complete the section from Pearsons Road to Goldfields; and to install signage and information kiosks.
- The www.cromwell.org.nz website managed by Front2Back at Greymouth is constantly being upgraded.
- The Group has also acted as 'administrators' for the Central Otago Farmers Market who operate at Old Cromwell. Next season will see Lesley Miller take over the 'reins' and it would be hoped that a new society is formed so it can act independently of the Group.
- The Group has assisted student Sarah Rose who is undertaking a major design exercise for Landscape Architecture at Lincoln; and provided information and comments for Erik Laytham's history of the Cromwell district, 'Centre of Central'.
- The Walk Cromwell brochure has been reprinted and two updates of the Tearaway Map have been distributed. A new 'Cromwell Districts Road Map' is in the planning stages.

Thank you everyone who has made the Group's activities such a success over the last year. Special thanks go to financial advisors Mead Stark, the Management Committee, all the Cromwell Summer Series staff, and Secretary Terry Emmitt. I wish the incoming President and Committee all the best for the year ahead.

Adrian Somerville
 President
 July 2009