

# The Harbour Herald

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Newsletter

December

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## The Penguin Club Celebrates 35 Years

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It all started in 1990, when a group of Oamaru musicians identified a need for a space to call their own - a space where they could practice, chill out after gigs, have a few drinks and not bother anyone with the noise.

A gig at the Five Forks Hall was put on as a fundraiser, and about \$150 was raised to get the ball rolling. On November 27, 1990, an open meeting was held and a week later the Penguin Entertainers Club was formed. The annex of the Andersons grain store in Emulsion Lane was transformed using borrowed and second-hand materials, straightened nails and diluted green paint and lots of enthusiasm! A stage & toilets were built and the music began. Initially, patrons brought their own drinks, but as the club grew and more money was raised, a basic bar was constructed using timber left over from an old movie set. Food was provided outside by a mobile food cart. Local bands practiced and jammed on a Friday night then the word got around the touring bands and promoters that there was this little venue with an appreciative audience and great acoustics between the main centres of Christchurch and Dunedin. Soon there were a wide range of gigs, and over the years had gone from one end of the spectrum to the other, from string quartets to full-on punk, to comedians, to burlesque shows! As soon as you enter the Penguin Entertainers Club, you are confronted with its rich history. The walls are plastered with 35 years of posters of past gigs featuring acts such as Supergroove, the Exponents, Anika Moa, Elemnop, the D4, Steriogram, Tami Neilson, Nathan Haines, the Feelers, Shona Laing, Sam Hunt and many international acts. The Club, run by volunteers, continues its support of local bands with jam nights every second Friday of the month and still has guest bands visiting. The Penguin Entertainers Club celebrated its 35th anniversary on Saturday 22nd November and is the Oamaru Whitestone Civic Trust's longest tenant.



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## McCarthy's Coal Building

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### McCarthy's Coal Building.

Has undergone a much-needed tidy-up, transforming it into a usable space. Purchased by the Trust in 2002 for \$28,000, the building will feature new retail and commercial spaces and a refreshed upper level, soon to host small events and functions.

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### Gary Kircher - Former Mayor of Waitaki

Was awarded Lifetime Membership to the Trust, in recognition of his many years of dedicated support as both Councillor and Mayor of Waitaki.





Vice-Chairman Graeme Clark presented the certificate at the Mayoral farewell

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## From The Archives 1998

### Criterion Hotel Restoration

Victorian Times Article:

For those of you who have visited recently, you will have seen scaffolding around the Criterion Hotel in Oamaru's Harbour and Tyne St Heritage Precinct. The Oamaru Whitestone Civic Trust's refurbishment of this landmark building—long the focal point of the original business area—is now well underway.

De Geest Construction were selected as the main contractor to complete the structural strengthening and interior work. A structural-strengthening diaphragm has been installed on the ground floor, and the original tongue-and-groove ceilings have been reinstated. The main interior works are scheduled for completion by early May, including the installation of a sprinkler system that will provide fire protection to the Criterion and four adjoining buildings.

New toilets and a kitchen have been constructed downstairs, with new tongue-and-groove flooring laid in the lounge, dining room, and hallway. Colin Dewe, the new lessee, has begun the interior decoration and the final fit-out prior to opening.

Dooleys Masonry is the contractor for the exterior refurbishment, which includes the replacement of the parapet. The decorative balustrades and urns will be reinstated, returning the building to its original glory. Their absence in recent years has left the Criterion looking, as some have said, "like a queen without her crown."

This \$600,000 project has been made possible through major grants from Lottery Environment and Heritage, Community Trust Otago, the Waitaki District Council, and the Alexander McMillan Trust. Once reopened, the Criterion will add to the expanding list of refurbished heritage buildings that continue to attract a growing number of visitors to this unique area.

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## **National Historic Landmark Update**

Public submissions for the proposed National Historic Landmark have now closed, and the support shown by the community has been outstanding! with more than 600 positive submissions received. The next step in the process is for Heritage New Zealand to submit the application to Minister Goldsmith.

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## **Board Elections**

The Oamaru Whitestone Civic Trust board elections are approaching, with nominations opening this month and closing on 31 December 2025 at 4pm. To request a nomination form, please email [membership@victorianoamaru.co.nz](mailto:membership@victorianoamaru.co.nz)  
**Financial / current members are eligible for election**

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## **Victorian Fete Success for the Trust**

The Victorian Fete was a tremendous success for the Trust, serving as our major public event of the year and helping to showcase the unique heritage precinct. First held in 1989 to promote the work of the Trust, the Fete has grown into a cherished community tradition.

This long-running event would not be possible without the generous and ongoing support of Network Waitaki, whose commitment over many years has played a vital role in ensuring the Fete's success, a huge thank you to the volunteers who turn up on the day to help make sure everything runs smoothly.

The week leading up to the Victorian Fete proved once again to be a wonderfully successful celebration of Oamaru's heritage. This vibrant, week-long festival continues to play a pivotal role in shaping Oamaru's reputation as a heritage destination, drawing visitors from near and far.

A thank-you goes to the dedicated committee and volunteers whose hard work, creativity, and commitment make this festival possible each year. The continued success of the festival is a testament to their vision and enthusiasm.



**CHRISTMAS-TYNE  
ON  
HARBOUR**

Late Night Shopping  
Shops open till 6:30pm

Mini Christmas Market  
4pm - 6:30pm  
Cycle Journeys building

Carol Singing  
6pm  
Whitestone City

Roving Christmas Choir and Pipe Band

23rd December  
HARBOUR AND TYNE STREET  
The Oamaru Whitestone Civic Trust

### Christmas – Tyne on Harbour

Our annual Christmas Street event is back. Shops and businesses in the Heritage Precinct will be open until 6:30pm, and there will also be a mini Christmas Market in Meeks Store, 6 Harbour Street.

Carol Singing 6pm  
Whitestone City

We will be joined by the Combined Schools Pipe Band, along with a roving choir

**23rd December  
4:00pm – 6:30pm**

### Wishing You a Merry Christmas.

The Trust wishes all our members, supporters, and friends a very Happy Christmas and a joyful holiday season. Thank you for your continued generosity and enthusiasm throughout the year—we look forward to an exciting 2026!

The Harbour Board Building has been decorated for Christmas, with the vintage reindeer from North Otago Farmers department Store, these Reindeer were a much loved part of the Christmas Parade in the 1960s and 70s.

There is also a Christmas Display in the Grain store this year with tree decorated by local community groups.



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Graeme Clark: Editor-in-Chief  
of the Harbour Herald