Denniston Heritage Trust wins again

Congratulations to the Denniston Heritage Trust which was named joint supreme winner at the 2012 New Zealand Tourism Awards in March.

The award acknowledges the huge efforts by volunteers to bring to life the mining history of Buller’s mighty balling, which has become one of the West Coast’s leading tourist attractions.

Denniston Heritage Trust Chair Peter Robertson received the award on behalf of the Trust and says it was a wonderful acknowledgment of all the hard work put into the project.

“We have had a lot of people giving their time as well as companies allowing their employees to help at no cost and it is fantastic to acknowledge this input. The project was kicked off by Development West Coast’s Major Regional Initiative (MRI), which was named joint supreme winner at the Tourism Awards in March. This positive result has been driven by strong local businesses and it is fantastic to acknowledge this in over the years.

“We are very proud of its achievements. The project will have enduring benefits to the region, both heritage of one of New Zealand’s largest producing coalfields, turning it into a unique visitor attraction that showcases the richness of Denniston’s historic and cultural story. DWC’s CEO John Chang says the Trust should be very proud of its achievements.”

"It is a fantastic acknowledgement of the work that has gone into this world class heritage project which will have enduring benefits to the region, both socially and economically," says Mark Chang.

Denniston was a place where the Trust has created a literary trail which brings to life the fictional story of the Denniston Rose, Jenny Patricks’ best selling book about life in the mining settlement in the 1890s.

Ask DWC Trustee Mark Lockington what happened to the Coast after years travelling and working around the world and he is quick to say it was the people.

"Coasters are fiercely independent, down to earth and straight up. I brought up on the West Coast and I love that what you see is what you get," he says.

Mark is a 43 year old 5th generation Coaster, his father Harry worked as an electrician in the mines and another Maia was a school teacher in Reefton for nearly 50 years. Born and educated in Reefton he left school and studied at Christchurch Polytechnic and CIT in Wellington to become a civil and structural engineer.

He began his working life for an engineering company in Christchurch but when the stock market crashed in the late 80s so did the building boom and Mark decided to go travelling. First stop was Pennsylvania where he worked a season in the kitchens at Camp America. Then he headed to London but after a couple of months he came back to New Zealand to study accountancy at Lincoln University.

"Engineering and accounting have a lot of similarities, in the main both are about numbers, calculations, processes and systems. I like structure and solutions so decided to come home to study accountancy," he says.

After graduating he worked in Ashburton for four years before he qualified as a chartered accountant. But the lust for adventure was still strong and earlier this year he packed up only a backpack and briefcase he flew to Perth. It didn’t take long to get work with BHP Alliance, a large iron ore company, based in Port Headland. Mark worked as the site accountant on a $2 billion project.

"The scale was amazing, the maintenance budget alone was over $200 million. There were some very tough, rough people you were dealing with but I loved it, it was one of those jobs where you long to wake up in the morning and can’t wait to go to work."

After two years he decided to move on, working for a couple of fly-in, fly-out operations in remote areas around Kalgocree and Mt Isa, before travelling in Queensland and Darwin. But the West Coast called and in 2001 Mark returned, his first job was as a business analyst for Development West Coast. The next year he joined Westland Milk Products as financial controller and in 2008 he became company secretary.

"I thoroughly enjoy working for Westland Milk Products, I have involvement with staff, directors and shareholders and it is great to see how successful the company has become," he says.

During his time with WMP Mark met his wife Maria, who was also working in the dairy industry. The couple have three children, five year old cafes, Grace, 2 year old Meg and one year old Danny and are now based in Hokitika.

It was his parents who taught him the importance of contributing to the community, so when the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants approached him in 2005 about being involved in the MRI Board Mark was happy to help. He is currently a trustee and the Chair of DWC’s Finance and Audit Committee and the Pike River Distribution Fund Committee.

"I believe DWC is one of the best things that has happened to the Coast. It is an entity with a bit of heart, that can benefit Coasters and the region – it has helped business and supported great initiatives like raising reading standards, and provided enduring assets to the region."