

Shameful vandalism at Te Kuiti cemetery

VANDALS have damaged two headstones in the old Te Kuiti cemetery.

The broken headstones were discovered by VJ Williams and Sons staff who informed the Waitomo District Council on Tuesday.

Community services officer Liz Riley says the headstones are very heavy and were originally set in concrete blocks above the graves.

While the council is reluctant to state the headstones were deliberately vandalised, any other explanation is unlikely.

“They do appear to have been pushed over and it is disgusting to see this happening in our cemetery,” says Mrs Riley.

Letting families know this has happened may be a challenge.

“The headstones belong to the families of the deceased. They are very old – dating to 1918 – so it may be difficult to locate them.”

If you have any information about the vandalism, you can phone Waitomo District Council in confidence – 0800 932 4357.



NO RESPECT: Two headstones dating from 1918 in the old Te Kuiti cemetery have been vandalised and Waitomo District Council wants information on who may have damaged them.



CHRISTMAS DRAWCARD: Hundreds attended the 23rd Carols in the Caves event from December 5-7 featuring the Waitomo Caves Choir (above) performing the finale *Silent Night* in English and Maori. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Annual caves choir event draws 100s

HOURS of preparation go into ensuring the Waitomo Caves Music Society performs perfectly, and this year's 23rd Carols in the Caves was nothing short of "magical".

Hosted in the Waitomo Glowworm Caves' Cathedral, the group once again delighted audiences over three nights (December 5-7).

The much-loved annual event is a favourite Christmas drawcard for many and this year about 600 people watched the festive performances.

Each night was near a sellout as the group, led by Beth Dalton, filled the cave with melodies of Christmas music and traditional carols.

The choir was again supported by the Waitomo Caves School choir – Titiwai.

PREPARATION

Perfecting their acapella-styled singing is crucial to the event's success with choir members beginning preparations in September, while the children started practices in November.

Waitomo Caves School parents helped prepare the venue and served a Christmas supper following the

carols.

Choir music director Martha Ash says the world-famous caves were filled with "an air of anticipation" as audience members arrived.

"This year from the darkness the audience heard the rich sound of men's voices singing the 16th Century carol *Personent Hodie*.

"As they sang, the women emerged silently out of the darkness to gather at the bottom of the risers. The sound grew to fill the Cathedral and the image was magical."

Rise up, Shepherd, and Follow was next on the list of carols with a solo from Neville Phillips.

Audience members sang along during the congregational songs, while the Titiwai choir added to the melodies with their rendition of *Children Go Where I Send Thee*. The choir ended with a traditional flourish and one of its favourite pieces *Light of Lights Beholden* followed by *Silent Night*, sung in Maori and English.

Money raised from the concert was used to cover the costs of equipment/music and donated to Waitomo Caves School and foodbanks in Te Kuiti and Otorohanga.

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