

Hard man attends rock blast

■ Dunback

By Debbie Porteous

Rugby legend Alex "Grizz" Wyllie literally felt the earth move under his feet yesterday.

The former All Black and New Zealand coach was the guest speaker at an open day at Taylor's Limeworks in Dunback that included a rock blast.

Operations manager Mark Silcock, of Palmerston, said John Nelson Drill and Blast, from Alexandra, had prepared the blast, which shook up more than 10,000 tonnes of rock and dirt and used 2 tonnes of explosive.

To blow up the solid rock, 25 holes measuring 89mm were drilled 3m apart to a depth of 12m.

Two "powergel" detonators with fuses attached were placed in each hole, which was then filled with 10m of an ammonium nitrate (fertiliser) and diesel mix. On top went a layer of crushed rocks to help the explosion spread wide instead of going straight up.

All that was left was to detonate the mix, said Mr Silcock.

"Basically, what it does is lift the rock, shatter it and throw it back down again."

The blast loosened enough rock to last about two months at this time of year. Blasting was carried out about four times a year, he said.

The limeworks produced about 30,000 to 40,000 tonnes of agricultural lime per year and about 10,000 tonnes of oxide (burned limestone).

The oxide was used mainly at the Oceana gold mine at Macraes Flat to neutralise mined dirt before it was returned to the landfill.

The Dunedin and Invercargill City Councils also used oxide in water treatment ponds, as did freezing works for effluent treatment, Mr Silcock said.

More than 100 people — customers, suppliers, neighbours and business partners — watched the blast and then completed a tour of the limeworks.

The purpose of the day was for invited guests to come along and see how the plant operated, Holcim general manager John Reeves said.

It was the first open day at the limeworks, owned by Holcim, but sister company McDonalds Limeworks, of Te Kuiti, had held six open days.

Mr Wyllie spoke about his experiences with the All Blacks and rural life.



PHOTOS: PETER McINTOSH

What a blast . . . More than 10,000 tonnes of limestone comes crashing down at Taylor's Limeworks, Dunback, yesterday. Over 100 people taking part in a plant open day watched from a safe distance as the rock wall was detonated.