



BLOCKHOUSE BAY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

NEWSLETTER

August 2023. Number 114

NEXT MEETING The Blockhouse Bay Historical Society next meeting is our AGM on Wednesday 2nd August at 1.15 pm in the Community Centre.

SPEAKER Following our brief AGM, including nomination and election of 2023-24 committee members, we are delighted to welcome our good friend and Blockhouse Bay boy: ALAN COLE who will speak about his time growing up here during the 50 & 60's, the property development that took place in the central Blockhouse Bay and the people he knew. Come along and bring a friend for a good bout of reminiscing & discovery, followed by a catch up natter over coffee/tea and tasty treats.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The AGM is upon us. Where did that year go? I am very happy to say, two people have already put their names forward for nomination onto the committee. I encourage all of you to consider getting involved in some way. Many hands make light work and also bring a diversity of skills and personal voice. I can truly say it is an honour and joy to work alongside this wonderful team of people.



HOPKINS Triple WEDDING 1914 taken at 301 Blockhouse Bay Rd

An update on the Heritage Festival for you. This will run from **23 September to 8 October**. As mentioned in the last newsletter the theme is Peace, Love and Protest. We will be holding a photo exhibition at Armanasco House entitled: **Weddings & the Ever Afters**. This will be open to the public on **Tues 26th Sep & Tues 3rd Oct 10am – 2pm**, AND **Wednesday 27th Sep & Wednesday 4th Oct 10am – 5pm** and will be advertised on the councils Heritage Festival website:

Chair; Krystene Vickers; krys@ekiwi.com

Vice Chair; Tony 626 6445 tony.joyce@xtra.co.nz

Secretary; Eileen 627 4416

Treasurer; Anne 627 8619

Life Members;

Keith Rusden, Eileen Rusden, Yvonne Dabb, Alan Cole
and Brian Goodwin

Visit our website; www.blockhousebayhistoricalsociety.com

Heritage Festival continued.

In collaboration with the Blockhouse Bay Library, the Blockhouse Bay Historical Society presents a dual exhibition of wedding images, stories and memorabilia through time at Armanasco House. Both venues are located in the Gittos Domain and we encourage everyone to view these complimentary exhibitions in tandem. There will be a wide variety of images across differing eras, many sourced from the community as well as our extensive archives. Together, we celebrate the history of love in the Bay.

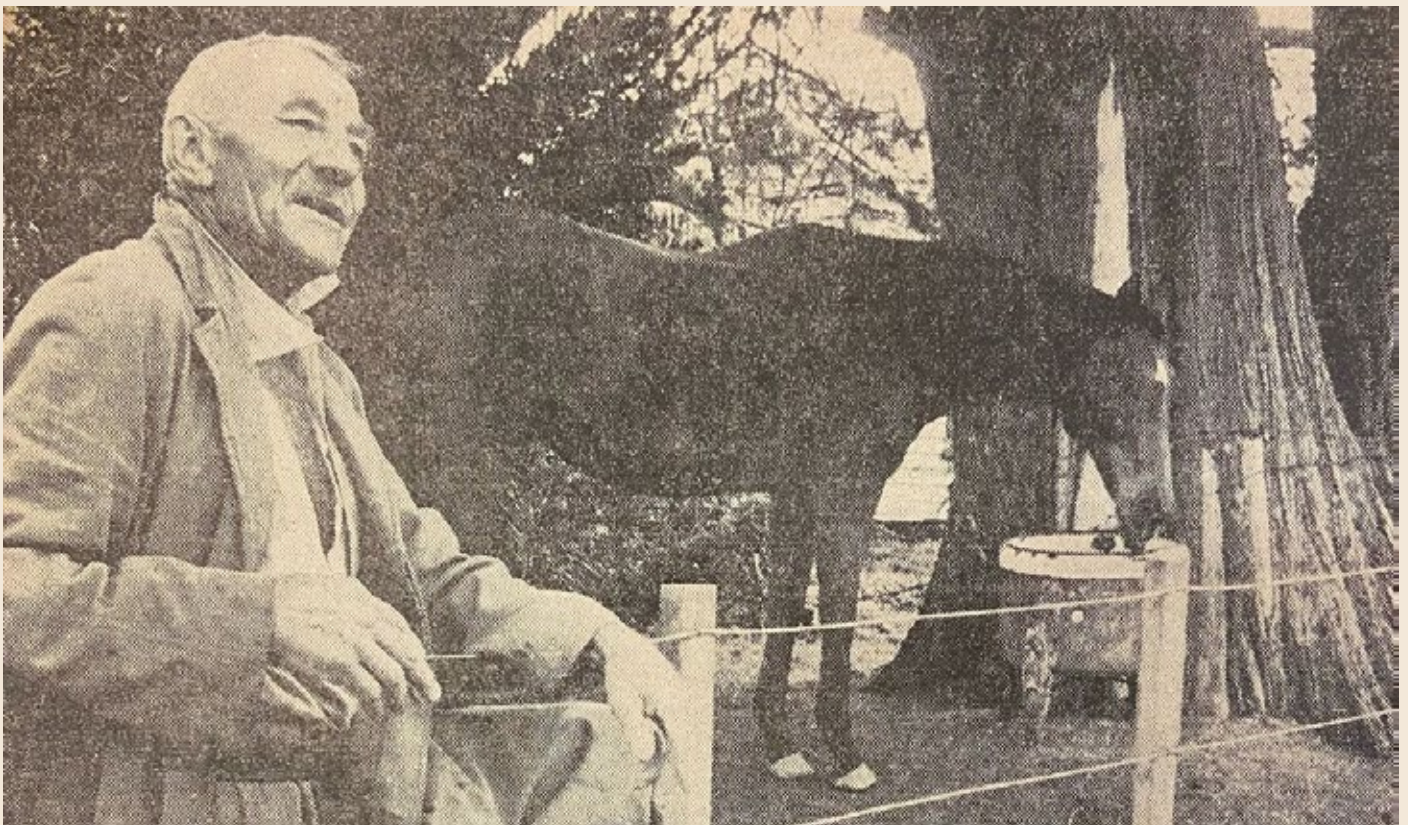
Thank you to those who have already brought us their wedding/anniversary photos & memorabilia – make sure you grab your chocolate fish reward off me at the meeting. For those who haven't dug out their albums yet, please do! You, your parents, uncles, aunts or children. The more we have the better. Remember, these do not need to have been taken in the bay, it is your association with the bay that counts.

Membership Renewal:

Now that our meetings and events are back on track after Covid derailed us, we feel it is now appropriate to reinstate our annual subscription. This is due by **20 Aug 2023**. These remain at the same rates: **\$15.00 for a single** or **\$25.00 per couple**.

Payment can be made direct to our **bank account**: 12-3049-0315621-00, **Code**: Sub, **Reference**: surname & initials.

Blockhouse Bay has had its fair share of colourful characters, each endearing themselves to the close knit local community of their time. Tales of their antics and eccentricities live on to this day, painting a colourful picture of life as it was in the far flung settlement on the edge of Auckland by the Manukau Harbour. One such resident was Roy Thompson, affectionately known as Tarby, who chose to leave something more tangible for future generations...



THE LEGACY OF ROY (TARBY) THOMPSON – THEN AND NOW

Excerpt from a newspaper article first published in May 1973 entitled: Darby does his “something good”*

‘Sixty five year old Mr Roy Thompson, or “Tarby”* as he is known to his friends, owns four acres of residential land at Avondale, has eight cats, a horse and lives in a house which is not connected to the power and has most windows broken.

But last week, he put on a white shirt and went into the city to have afternoon tea and cakes with city councillors.

The reason? He had just donated 1 ¼ acres of his land to the council for pensioner housing.

“It was in memory of my late wife and family.” Said Mr Thompson today as he looked over the now cleared site which he estimates is worth more than \$50,000.

But the anomaly of the situation is that the house in which Mr Thompson lives is ready to fall down. Only two rooms of the former farmhouse, which is surrounded by residential development, are lived in – the rest consists of only four walls and a floor.

He has had countless offers for his property from speculators who tell him that he could build a mansion from the proceeds and live in wealth for the rest of his life. “But I don’t want to sell – nobody can make me,” he says, shaking his fist.

“I now have property enough for my horse and I am not vain – I live the way I want to,” he explains.

Mr Thompson came to the notice of the city council some years ago when health inspectors visited his property.

He gradually became friends with chief health inspector, Mr Roy Agnew.

And Mr Agnew became aware that Mr Thompson wanted to do something for elderly people, who he says have not been as fortunate as himself.

“I am determined to do something good before I go. I have thrown so much money away in my life.

So last week after months of negotiating, the council and Mr Thompson finally signed the documents necessary.

Mr Thompson was a professional boxer in the 1930’s and on the window sill in his bedroom are numerous cups, now gathering dust with a collection of ‘treasures’ which belonged to his late wife.

The whole property is overgrown and in a garage sits an Austin A40 – which he has not used for three years.

“I could have this place looking like a picture if I wanted to, but it’s mine and I do what I want,” he says.

The council will spend \$200,000 to build a pensioner flat village on the site.

“They are to be called Thompsons Memorial Flats,” Tarby* says with a smile.

**Edit note: Roy’s nickname was incorrectly spelt Darby in the original article. We have corrected this error in the text above.*

Fast forward 50 years

February 2023

For many of us who have lived in the bay for some years, these pensioner flats nestled on green lawn are a familiar part of Bolton Street. We took it for granted they would always be there; the retired residents an integral part of our local community. It was not until a Facebook post appeared in our Blockhouse Bay Group Page in February 2023 that we became aware Tarby may not have reason to smile anymore.

Thanks to the tireless efforts and comprehensive research of local school teacher, Benji Nathan, the community was alerted to the fact that all of the flats on Tarby's gifted land were to be demolished and replaced by a new Kāinga Ora development. On the face of it, this could have been a good thing; the 50 year old dwellings were showing their age and were built at a time when insulation, damp proof course and vapour barriers were not widely used. New, code compliant units with energy efficient double glazing and all the mod cons for the elderly residents would be a wonderful continuation of Tarby's legacy.

The problem is, the proposed new higher density development as it stands does not include any dwellings for pensioners. It is intended for families, young couples and those with accessibility needs. This is due in part to a larger percentage of people in these categories presently on the urgent waiting list for housing. Another contributing factor is that Kāinga Ora is concurrently planning complexes for older people in nearby Avondale.

Digging deeper, Mr Nathan discovered Kāinga Ora appears to have been given a hospital pass by the council. Back in 2003, the then Auckland City Council quietly transferred ownership of a large number of pensioner housing units to Kāinga Ora (at the time known as Housing New Zealand Corporation) – including Roy Thompson's pensioner flats – without any encumbrances. Roy Thompson's signed agreement, with the council with the stated purpose for which the land was being gifted was not disclosed at this time. The transfer happened without public notification or consultation.

Sadly, it appears no one from Kainga Ora when inspecting the site took time to read the bronze plaque located at the entrance to the complex or ascertain its significance.

April 2023

Thanks to the ongoing efforts of Mr Nathan, a public meeting was held at the Blockhouse Bay Community Centre, chaired by local MP Dr Deborah Russell. The questions and concerns regarding the proposed development were noted and then one member of the community was able to volunteer to speak on each topic.

Then Kāinga Ora representatives attending were invited to have right of reply. The prevailing feeling was, the community was not against the development or that it was for social housing.



The public meeting was held at the Blockhouse Bay Community Centre.

Their main concerns & questions were: How can land gifted for the express purpose of providing pensioner housing now be replaced by a development with no allowance for pensioner housing at all? What is the legality of this? Has due consideration been given to traffic congestion; already a major problem on Bolton Street during peak times. The proposed new road through the site, connecting Marlowe Street with Bolton Street, creates yet another intersection along a small stretch of busy road with a primary school at one end and intermediate school near the other. Resulting in even greater traffic flows and manoeuvring. Given the recent flooding events in Marlowe Street, what impact will this higher density development, including new road and a much larger percentage of hard landscaping, have on storm water runoff onto surrounding properties?

Although no resolution was reached on any of the above, the lines of communication remain open and ongoing. Lawyers are looking into the legality of going against the purpose for which the land was gifted.

June 2023

Following an article in RNZ, Benji Nathan was able to track down members of Roy Thompson's family. Following a phone call where they told Mr Nathan stories about their great uncle and how he got his nickname. The great nieces and nephew issued a family statement...

FAMILY STATEMENT - 19TH JUNE 2023

ROY 'TARBY' THOMPSON



**Statement prepared by great nieces and
nephew of Roy (Tarby) Thompson.**

"ROY BENJAFIELD THOMPSON (known as "Tarby") was born in Auckland to Ernest Dornford Thompson and Blanche Marie Thompson (nee Benjafield) in 1907 and died in 1979. He gained his nickname whilst serving in Egypt with the New Zealand Army for several years (Thompson, Roy Benjafield - T.R.B. - known as Tarby). He was the youngest of 8 siblings, his father had been the Post Master at Avondale Post Office from 1912 to 1921 and was very well known and respected in the area. The family lived in a large house at 69 Bolton Street, Blockhouse Bay. Our uncle and mother grew up in that house, children of his next oldest sister, Julia.

In 1933, his first wife Jean Thompson (nee Parkinson), passed away and in 1959, he married his second wife, Hilda Aprha Ingly. He then served in Egypt for several years in the New Zealand Army and returned to New Zealand somewhat unsettled from what he had witnessed during that time. His marriage to Hilda disintegrated and they divorced. He then married again but that union was short lived.

He was a bit of a 'diamond in the rough' but with a heart of gold. Despite his outward appearance, he was a kind person underneath and he would do anything for you if he was able. His exploits are legendary within the family. He crossed the seas to Australia often, stowing away in the hold of ships with his beloved motorbike. He had a racehorse called Freezing Point which was apt because it never won anything. He was friends with Barry Crump. Maurice Shadbolt lived next door as a child and used to hang out with Mum and her brother.

He was the most colourful family member in an already colourful family. However, he died alone in an unkempt house, newspapers stacked against the walls for warmth, no electricity and with windows broken by local louts. Despite this, and totally in line with his generous nature, he gifted land to the Auckland City Council for pensioner housing. He was really happy when he had donated the land for local elderly people he knew in the area who had worked hard all their lives but could not afford a retirement place of their own. A brass plaque on the site reads as follows:

"IN MEMORY

IN MEMORY OF HIS LATE WIFE HILDA THOMPSON AND PARENTS BLANCHE AND ERNEST THOMPSON, ROY BENJAFIELD THOMPSON PRESENTS THE LAND ON WHICH THESE FLATS ARE SITED TO THE AUCKLAND CITY COUNCIL AS A GIFT TO BE EMPLOYED EXPRESSLY FOR PROVIDING HOUSING FOR SENIOR CITIZENS OF AUCKLAND"

If the last nine words in that statement are not clear enough, we don't know what would be required to make the intention of this gift any more obvious! There is no end date. He clearly gifted his land to the Auckland City Council for pensioner housing, nothing else. He would be turning in his grave right now if he was aware of the disingenuous deceit of the Council in selling to a third party whose profit making intentions are clearly directly at odds with the original gift.

We, as family to Tarby, object in the strongest terms to the proposed misuse of the land that was gifted in perpetuity to Auckland City Council for the express purpose of providing pensioner housing to the people of Auckland, a rare resource and one which will become more and more necessary with the ageing population of New Zealand.

July 2023

Benji Nathan and fellow local, Tarawhati Williams (known as T) reported back on their meeting with Kāinga Ora as representatives of the wider Blockhouse Bay community. They met with Andrew and Caroline, the CEO and deputy CEO of Kāinga Ora respectively. Although the outcome of this meeting was one of disappointment: as yet there is no provision to honour the wishes of Roy 'Tarby' Thompson, there was some progress made. The three main issues discussed....

Land gifting. Their response: "We have committed to tell the story and history of the site as part of its redevelopment."

Traffic. Their response: "I can confirm that in addition to the engagement of traffic planning consultants to prepare a Traffic Impact Assessment as part of the resource consent application, Kāinga Ora has engaged a qualified engineer to complete an independent Road Safety Audit to support the engineering plan approval application, which has been submitted to Auckland Council. A second audit will then be undertaken once the construction of the road and intersection is complete. These assessments will be undertaken per NZTA Road Safety Audit procedures for projects guidelines. A Construction Traffic Management Plan will also be submitted to Auckland Council for certification, prior to the commencement of works."

Engagement. Their response: "We can share project milestone updates with the Facebook community. There are other channels we can use for people not on social media, including 'hard copy' updates to the Blockhouse Bay Community Centre and Blockhouse Bay Library. The local team regularly connect in with the Whau Local Board, local councillors and Dr Deborah Russell's office as elected representatives. Project milestones will also be shared with those entities and individuals."

Benji and Tarawhati also note in their update, they are awaiting legal position from Parry Field Lawyers, who continue to provide regular updates. The council is preparing its planning report, which will be reviewed in-house by a council employee and then sent to a duty commissioner for an independent decision. In coming to their decision, the duty commissioner will consider the community feedback.

Benji's closing comment: 'Now is the time to stand together as a community and not back down. We have come this far. My strength is not that of an individual but that of the collective.'

Subsequent to this, we had a surprise visit from two very polite people from Kāinga Ora at Armanasco House on Tuesday. They were wanting to find out all the history on Roy Thompson and also asked those present what they thought about the possibility of having mixed use housing, for both pensioners and families in the new development. A positive move forward we hope.

After all, we all want those in need to be housed. No one is disagreeing about that. The current housing crisis has not been this bleak since the great depression almost 100 years ago. In light of the Kāinga Ora pensioner housing proposals for Avondale, perhaps the simple solution is to have pensioners and families in both. Thus honouring Tarby's legacy, while providing the right proportion of home types for those who most urgently need them. Even better, they get to choose between more central, but busier Avondale or slightly further out, quieter Blockhouse Bay.

Kāinga Ora have arranged to come and see us again. We will keep you posted.

