

BLOCKHOUSE BAY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

NEWSLETTER

December 2023. Number 116

NEXT MEETING

THE BLOCKHOUSE BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY meeting is on Wednesday 6th December at 1.15pm in the Community Centre.... Make sure you save the date as we have two special treats in store for you...

SPEAKER: Karla Robertson, Marketing manager at LynnMall shopping centre will be giving us a talk & slide presentation celebrating the 60th anniversary of LynnMall. Many of you may have personal memories of the grand opening of LynnMall in 1963 - the first of its kind in New Zealand at the time. This nearby mall has been a constant presence in our lives to this day.

PHOTO EXHIBITION: for those of you who were unable to attend our recent Heritage Festival event at Armanasco House, our WEDDINGS & THE EVER AFTERS photos & stories will be on display for you to view during our complimentary afternoon tea.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Another year has flown by and Christmas is almost upon us. The sun is making a regular appearance and Cyclone Gabrielle is no longer uppermost in our minds. Even memories of the global pandemic are fading into the background with only the occasional person we know catching a much milder (thankfully) bout of Covid-19 now. Here we all are, getting on with life, albeit with an eye on the news of devastating conflict as it evolves in other parts of the world. Testament to the remarkable resilience of people generally and communities as a whole. This year has been a gradual journey back to normality, resetting our routines and getting out and about socially once more. It somehow seems appropriate now to reflect upon the past few 'not at all what we expected' years.

I would like to respectfully acknowledge all those who suffered serious illness, lost a family member or dear friend during the pandemic or in the Whakaari (White Island) eruption, had their homes flooded during this year's extreme weather events or have family members currently caught up in conflicts overseas. Our hearts go out to you all.

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;

Eileen Rusden, Yvonne Dabb, Alan Cole and Brian Goodwin

Visit our website; www.blockhousebayhistoricalsociety.com

Sadly, our historical society did not go untouched by the pandemic, we lost our friend and committee member Jean Ford to Covid-19 last year.

Many others in our community were affected by the unprecedented rainfall in January - March, including two of our committee members: Anne Bell and Terry Thurtell. The almost back-to-back weather events caused destruction and devastation for many North Island communities. Torrential rain caused slips to come down through people's homes, destroying livelihoods and in some cases, claiming lives. We were very fortunate no one was hurt here in Blockhouse Bay. Sadly, the official death toll from Cyclone Gabrielle was 11; the majority of these were in Hawke's Bay, where I grew up.

Throughout the North Island there are now 3588 yellow-stickered buildings, where access is restricted, and 4673 buildings with white stickers, meaning they can be used but may not be safe because of unseen damage. A further 750 buildings have been red-stickered, meaning they cannot be entered at all because of damage.



Bolton Street suffered severe flooding during multiple deluges from late January to early March 2023



Blockhouse Bay Beach grassed area and sand beneath the floodwaters January 2023.



Initial slip at Blockhouse Bay Beach January 2023. This was followed by further erosion and slippage during subsequent weather deluges that lasted until early March. The walkway was cleared twice during this time. The debris of mud and broken trees remains to this day in the water below and at the base of the slope.

It is fair to say, many families have had their lives turned upside down during these past few years. The pandemic, volcanic eruption and extreme weather events coming at us in Biblical proportions, it felt at times. However, what has been heartening to see throughout all this, were the heroic actions of ordinary people doing daring rescue missions, the simple acts of kindness shown to their neighbours during lockdowns and the unexpected generosity of strangers when things got tough. It was fantastic to see the highly organised and completely voluntary 'Student Army' doing a stellar job cleaning up after the multiple flooding and the huge number of community groups providing all sorts of practical help and support to those affected through all of these events.

One particularly poignant memory for me was standing at the top of our drive in the predawn darkness on Anzac Day in 2020 listening to the service on the radio during our very first nationwide lockdown. Then walking slowly down to watch the sunrise over Blockhouse Bay Beach, neighbours and strangers wordlessly joining the procession - all keeping a safe distance apart - as we proceeded down the hill. Hearing the Last Post ring out as the indigo sky turned to pink and gold across the Bay is a memory I will never forget. This impromptu moment of community 'togetherness'. One young man's story from our archives came to mind as I stood there. Richard (Dick) Barker had visited his yachting friends at the beach on his final leave in NZ.

The last some of them saw of him was waving goodbye as he drove back up Endeavour Street in his beloved 2-seater Hillman Aero Minx convertible sports car.



Pilot Officer Barker was captain of a Lancaster Bomber aircraft that took off from Mepal on the night of 25/26th August 1944 to attack the target of Russelsheim, Germany. The aircraft failed to return to its base and the crew, which included two other New Zealanders besides FO Barker, Sergeant W. G. Norton and Wing Officer R. Firth, were reported missing. The International Red Cross, quoting German information, later indicated that Dick Barker had lost his life on 26 Aug 1944.

I am sure we are all beginning to process our thoughts and recollections of everything that has happened to us since March 2020. The historic society is gradually compiling local stories and photos of Blockhouse Bay during the global pandemic and this year's extreme weather events. We would greatly value any contribution you can make. No matter how insignificant your story may feel to you, we would appreciate you getting in touch to share it with us. We encourage you to do this sooner rather than later, while the memories are still fresh. When future generations look back on these times it is important to have a rich variety of voices for them to hear.



Sheila Sekula beside her photos in the exhibition at Armanasco House.



Angela Grace-Jones beside her photos in the exhibition at Armanasco House.



Anne Bell beside her photos in the exhibition at Armanasco House.



Eileen Rusden beside her photos in the exhibition at Armanasco House.

One of the special highlights for us this year was being part of the Auckland Heritage Festival once again. Thank you to those who joined us at Armanasco House to enjoy our Weddings & the Ever Afters (1890 - 1995) photo exhibition. Thanks to our amazing volunteers: Tony Joyce, Terry Thurtell,

Brian Goodwin, Hetty Goodwin, Diane Laffoley, Doris Selwyn, Eileen Rusden, Anne Bell, Alan Cole, Ian Printy and his daughter Anna who did a great job helping our younger visitors make their origami hearts, the event was a great success.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge those who kindly made their photos available to us for the display. Society members: Sheila Sekula, Angela Grace-Jones, Anne Bell, Eileen Rusden, Jan Bennett, Brian & Hetty Goodwin. Blockhouse Bay locals: Wendy Styles, Susan Whitefield, Robyn Eades, David Bell and Jo McGuigan. Thank you! Without your generosity we would not have had such a rich and varied set of images and stories to share.

We welcomed 100 visitors to Armanasco House during the two week festival, many of whom had never been there before and received positive feedback from them all. A lovely result to end the year on.

Wishing you all a warm and joyful Christmas holiday, with plenty of sunshine and laughter

Krystene

Leaving a lasting legacy of local history. In August this year, Blockhouse Bay lost a local legend: Keith Rusden.



Eileen & Keith on their 50th wedding anniversary in 2006.

Well known to many of us, Keith Rusden was Chairperson of the Blockhouse Bay Historical Society for 11 years. During his term in office the society became an important part of village life, growing from six paid up members when he took up the role in 2004 to a considerably larger group of

enthusiastic supporters & volunteers when he laid down the mantle in 2015.

Although not originally from Blockhouse Bay, many of you will know that Keith's association with the Bay came in the form of cupid and a local girl named Eileen Eades. So our thanks should go to her for bringing this guy into our midst, when she and Keith settled back here upon retirement in the late 1990's. Fascinated by the story of how Blockhouse Bay got its name from the strategically placed 'blockhouse' built by the colonial government of the day to defend against attack from the Manukau Harbour, Keith got involved with the historical society and plunged into the task of researching, recording and preserving our history, alongside his wife Eileen and fellow enthusiasts Ray Kealey, Hazel Simpkin, Alva Exler, Bill Glen, Maureen Exler, Alan Rudge, Merrill Bourne, Doris Selwyn, George Hogan, Nancy Weir, Joyce Davies and Yvonne Dabb.

145 years of local history on display

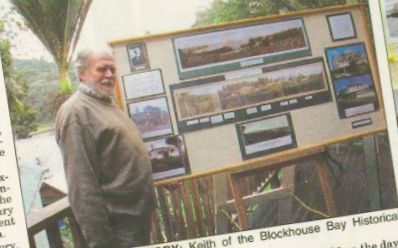
Delve into the colourful local history of Blockhouse Bay this Sunday, July 24, when the Blockhouse Bay Historical Society hold their Open Day.

The free event is being held at the Community Hall, 524 Blockhouse Bay Road, from 10am - 4pm. Refreshments will be available.

The invitation is extended to all and sundry to celebrate the 145 year anniversary of the first permanent building in the area.

Slept in history, Blockhouse Bay took its name from the strategically placed 'blockhouse' built by the colonial Government in 1816 with the intention of defending Auckland against an attack by the upper Manukau Harbour. It represented one of 11 defence units around Auckland.

Completed in July 1860, the blockhouse was occupied by imperial and colonial soldiers during the Land Wars. In 1865 after hostilities ceased, Captain Gillman and his family were residents until the building was destroyed by



DOCUMENTING HISTORY: Keith of the Blockhouse Bay Historical Society with one of their display boards.

Blockhouse Bay started in the 1880's when subdivisions began. The population gradually swelled to today's busy Auckland City suburb.

The Blockhouse Bay Historical Society has put in a lot of hard work in preparation for this Open Day. You will see display boards, memorabilia and to coincide with the event, they have also published a comprehensive book covering the full story of how Blockhouse Bay got its name. Copies will be available for sale for \$6 on the day.

Come along to learn about your area, or share some of your own historical photographs and memorabilia with the society. Any information regarding the Maseri Pa on Te Whau Point would be greatly appreciated.

For more information on the Blockhouse Bay Historical Society or their Open Day on July 24, phone Keith on 627 4416, or visit www.blockhousebay.com



ORIGINAL BUILDINGS: Display boards will document various interesting aspects of Blockhouse Bay in times past.



CALM WATERS: Blockhouse Bay as it looked in the early 1900's.



145th anniversary display, Blockhouse Bay Community Centre, 2005.

Pohutukawa Gazette article 19 July 2005.

I first met Keith in 2007 while collaborating with fellow historical society member Bill Glen on the new WWI & II Honours Board for the Blockhouse Bay Primary School. Both Keith and Bill inspired me with their research skills, meticulous attention to detail and boundless enthusiasm.

Today the whole community benefits from his efforts to showcase the many photos and artefacts in Armanasco House. Among Keith's many innovations and projects, was the very successful display marking the 145th anniversary of the Blockhouse in 2005; for which he wrote the booklet 'Why Blockhouse Bay'. In 2012 he researched and published a comprehensive chronological history entitled: 'South Whau Blockhouse - The story that gave the Bay its name.' It was this aspect of our local history that enticed Keith to join the society in the first place. We miss him. He is gone but not forgotten. His voice lives on in the enormous amount of historical records he compiled and books he wrote. Today we are privileged to be able to build on the wonderful foundation he and those around him made for this community.

Krystene Vickers

Right: Armanasco House on day of Santa Parade 2016.
 From left on the veranda: Keith Rusden, Joyce Davies & her sister Maureen Curgenven, Brian Goodwin (standing), a visitor, Eileen Rusden and Maureen Exler far right.



Blockhouse Bay Historical Society movers and shakers 2004.



A quiet achiever whose creativity and knowledge of the Bay enriched the lives of so many.

In November this year, Blockhouse Bay lost a well loved local librarian and true advocate for the early history of the Bay - Carol Augustine



Carol Augustine

Carol Augustine was a local girl, went to Lynfield College and stayed in her house in Blockhouse Bay till the end. A familiar face to many of you when visiting the library. She knew a lot about the topography of Blockhouse Bay and surrounding areas. Carol started her library journey on 19th Jan 1976 at Auckland public libraries and gave wonderful service to the community for more than four decades from various departments and in different roles. She completed 47 years working at Auckland Libraries this year!

The last six years of her library journey were here at Blockhouse Bay library, where she flourished, calling it 'her home'. Carol joined the Blockhouse Bay Library in 2017 as library assistant. She was a trained librarian and loved librarianship. She had a vast knowledge on various topics and subjects, ranging from car manuals, sustainability,

volcanoes, meteorology, cooking, local history and gaming to mention a few. A highly collaborative and well-loved member of staff.

The diorama depicting the life of the Māori tribe in the seasonal te Whau Pā in the 1600s Blockhouse Bay is a testimony to her research skills, imagination and creativity. A great educational tool and a legacy that she has left behind for the community.



Diorama at Blockhouse Bay Library.

Carol had learned te reo Māori and was a great champion for promoting te reo and creating awareness of te ao Māori. She lent her beautiful singing voice to waiata singing and never missed an opportunity to lead or take part. She had great respect for the Māori worldview and taught us the basic te reo, leading us to win the staff Matariki championship.

Her last project which she initiated and started, before she fell seriously ill, was the 'Love Me Tender' photograph exhibition at the library for the 2023 Heritage Festival. This was done in collaboration with our friends at the Blockhouse Bay Historical Society. Her project to ask the community to contribute wedding photographs over a span of 90 years from 1890 to 1980 was very successful and the exhibition of wedding photographs got wide media publicity, customer attention and was well attended. Sadly, Carol was too unwell to see the exhibition herself.

Carol was a lot of fun, enjoyed cooking and baking and loved dressing for the various library led Christmas parties and Roadshows to rest homes. She was a strong and brave person and fought her illness till the end stoically and independently. We miss her terribly.

Padmini Raj - friend and colleague