

## NEXT MEETING -

**The Blockhouse Bay Historical Society next meeting is our AGM on Wednesday 2nd OCTOBER at 1.30 pm. in the Community Centre.**

**Guest Speaker-** We are delighted to welcome our speaker Jacqui Knight MNZM. Jacqui is a very well known Bay local, who will tell us about the history of the Butterfly Trust and the story of establishing the butterfly garden in the Terry Street reserve. This will be a fascinating subject, come along and bring a friend.

## Membership renewal

A big thank you to those who have renewed your membership of the Society, your support is very much appreciated.

For those who may have mislaid the form, a replacement form is attached.

## Local Village News

Good news, the Community Centre is looking good without the scaffolding now, and the refurbished toilet block is an asset to the village.

The never ending road works have tried the patience of locals, Donovan Street is now negotiable up to Boundary Road, but Watercare is currently working alongside the College in White Swan Road. Heaphy Street entrance will be closed till mid October. It seems every road in the Bay has those dreaded cones lined up slowing down the flow of traffic.

**KAINGA ORA DEVELOPMENT.** Through local campaigner Benji Nathan, the costs update for the Bolton Street/Marlowe Road development, have been published and makes very interesting reading with the total cost spent to date across the whole project being \$4,180,266.12 (love the 12 cents !!) with no construction dates in sight.



## Blockhouse Bay Library Closure

The news of the lengthy closure of our Library – from 13th October to June next year, is certainly sad news, as locals will have to travel to Avondale or New Lynn to borrow books. This time frame for repairs is longer than the original building time frame, as by mid 1994 plans had been drawn up, consents obtained, and in September 1994 construction started with the official opening on 24 February 1995.

This announcement of having to travel out of our area for library services, brings back memories of how hard the local population worked to get the library built in the village.

Blockhouse Bay has a long history of community consultation, remember the recent protest led by Benji Nathan to reinstate the pensioner housing in Marlowe Road,

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then the protest to Auckland Transport to void their decision to establish a rest area for drivers to park double decker buses along our main street, and it was the power of the people who obtained our wonderful facility after a lengthy fight with Auckland City Councillors.

Blockhouse Bay for many years was served by a Mobile Library, which visited the area two days a week. Local residents were not happy, however, complaining that it could not supply a wide enough range of reading material. The people wanted access to reference books, a wide range of children's books, and books to cater for all ages and reading tastes.

Jim Gilbert, Chairman of the Community Centre Committee, Merle Martin and Robyn Barnaby were the main instigators who were pushing for the Bay's own local library. Jim spent many hours with Council officers, but met with a lot of opposition to all requests.

Because one of the Councillors had stated that Bay residents did not even know what they wanted, the Blockhouse Bay Protest Committee was formed and they really did their homework. They researched the number of schools, the number of pupils, as well as the requirements of the residents, including the needs of the elderly in rest homes and retirement villages. To inform the Council how serious the community was, in May 1993, local architects prepared plans for a building which was designed to compliment the historic Armanasco House, and to show how the site on the village green was ideal.

A Protest Petition was opened and very quickly gained over 700 signatures. Because of their frustration with the Council, the local residents decided to take their Petition in force into a full Council meeting in the Town Hall at 7 p.m. on the 11th November 1993. From the time this decision was taken, there was just a week before the meeting to advertise the time and date for residents to join forces with the committee. But the response was amazing, a bendy bus with seating capacity for 72 was hired and was filled to capacity with standing room only. As soon as the bus was filled they literally went to town, or to the Town Hall, that is, to meet up

with other protestors who had found their own way into town. In all, 140 Bay residents invaded the Council meeting.

Needless to say, the Councillors did not put out the welcome mat for the protestors, some individual Councillors became quite abusive and rude. Once again the Bay protestors were asked did they really know what they were protesting about, and did they really know what they wanted. The group responded by producing the figures they had researched, complete with architect drawings.

Meanwhile there was much waving of protest flags, children and babies were getting restless, and tempers were becoming frayed. In spite of more debate, no decision was reached and the Councillors went to their tea break in the room next door, the smell of coffee and hot savouries wafted into the chamber and made the protestors even more restless.

When business resumed, the debate still raged back and forth until one Councillor is reputed to have said — "Let's give them their Library, and get the buggers out of here." The Council had never had a meeting like this one, eventually the Motion was put and passed 19–3. And the triumphant and exhausted protestors returned home to the Bay.

The Blockhouse Bay Library became a reality on the perfect site for such a community facility, the Village Green. On a lovely summer evening at 7 p.m. on the 25th February 1995, Auckland Mayor, Les Mills performed the opening, accompanied by the Mayoress Colleen, and assisted by Jonathon Hunt, New Lynn MP, and Avondale Community Board Chair, Veronica Egan.

But once the speeches were over, it was a night for the people to celebrate their victory over officialdom, and celebrate they did. It seemed like every resident of Blockhouse Bay came to enjoy the 'Mardi Gras' street parade, the bands, the ethnic dancers on the road stage. By 10 p.m., festivities concluded, and the locals went home, happy in the knowledge their library was now a reality and would be there for future generations of Bay residents to enjoy.

*The temporary structure from Sandy Bay to the power pylon - September 2024*

