

## **History of the Beach Haven/Birkdale Residents and Ratepayer's Association Inc.**

By Percy Allison (Life Member)      22 August 2004

The early District Ratepayer's Association was formed in approximately the 1930's and held their meetings in Dean's Hall (since demolished), adjacent to the Beach Haven Wharf.

The early Birkdale Fruitgrower's Assoc. Community Hall was situated at 222 Beach Haven Road by Lancaster Road. This hall was destroyed by fire, New Years Eve 1949. The twelve hundred pounds Insurance pay-out was then donated to the newly reformed Birkdale/Beach Haven Residents and Ratepayer's Assoc. when the Fruitgrowers' Assoc. folded. The money was then used to buy the block of land fronting Rangatira Road in 1958, behind the present Sunnyhaven shops.

The intention was to firstly, build and then let four shops on Rangatira Road, the rent from which would go towards a deposit on our new hall to be built on its present site.

The first AGM I attended was held in Dean's Hall in 1959, at the time I opened my first Barber shop adjacent the Old Beach Haven Post Office.

Our committee meetings were then held at Mrs. Rae Thomas' residence in Beach Haven Road.

The new Chairman was Noel Currie (chemist), Bill Hogarth (Secretary) and Eric Watts (Treasurer).

Committee: Milly Watts, Bob Jones, Noel Harrison, Mrs. Johnson, Frank Larking, Les Coombes, Percy Allison, Geoff Hill (Honorary Auditor)

When a loan was hard to raise without collateral; on behalf of Waitemata Developments Ltd, Mr. Hill proposed we sell the front commercial sections, the money from which would go towards the deposit to build the new hall. The remainder of the money needed would be raised from five pound public debentures.

An unused hut from the Harbour Bridge project was obtained and voluntary labour had our first temporary hall erected on the present site in 1960.

A temporary structure application was granted by the Birkenhead Borough Council until a new hall was built for us by Bert Evans,

builder, who extended the floor area to include toilets, stage, kitchen and committee rooms.

The first tenants were the Beach Haven Indoor Bowls Club. Doug Day took Judo lessons also in early times. Also to help hall funds a sub-committee comprising Bob Jones, Milly Watts, and Percy Allison held Saturday night dance evenings. Charlie Welch organized and supplied volunteer musicians. Ladies brought a plate, men five shillings to enter.

After 25 years, whilst the hall was paying its way we still owed \$1,200 on the mortgage.

Percy Allison offered to organize a Beach Haven Derby Fun Night in 1983. There was however some reluctance to hold an illegal gambling event so he hired the hall under his own name and soon had willing committee members organizing the supper and refreshments for sale. Alan Tanner organized the totalisator.

Jack Curtis made six wooden horses and six local females dressed in Jockey attire rode them for all eight races.

A friendly Licensed Auctioneer gave his services free of charge to conduct the races. Two large wooden dices were rolled by chute from the stage to the floor when the "Tote" closed. One number was for the horse – the other was for the horse to move forward to the required pre-marked lines on the floor.

Forty eight horses were pre-sold at \$10 per horse. The owners gave them a fancy name and naturally invited family and friends to attend - making a large crowd.

The evening was a huge success with the hall becoming debt-free as from that night!