

Local Fund Raising

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The Queen Carnival

After 50 years of use the floor of the District Hall was starting to wear out. Table tennis. Tug of War. Years of dancing. Weekly Pictures shown. All these had caused the grooves in the tongue and groove flooring to break away.

Any dancer wearing stiletto shoes was in danger.

The Hall Committee called a District Meeting to decide how the floor could be fixed. There was a good muster.

The Committee had asked Bill Heal the local builder for his ideas. Bill could build anything from a dog kennel to a mansion and he was trusted by the district.

He had two suggestions.

If they had the money he could replace the existing floor. He noted that it had to be a floating floor. It would cost five hundred pounds for material and labour. He couldn't do it for any less.

He knew that the committee did not have that sort of money and he had another way.

He could supply materials and give advice. The district would supply labour with Working Bees. He would keep an eye on levels. Doing it this way the cost would be about two hundred and fifty pounds.

There was a lengthy discussion. Could we afford two hundred and fifty pounds? Would Working Bee labour have the skills needed for the job? That was the question?

Further noisy talking course we had the skills. How about a Queen Carnival to raise the money?

We don't want another meeting. Those who don't want a carnival go home. The rest of us, lets get stuck in and draw up details.

Beach versus Bush and what about the Maoris?

The Princes whose team raises the most money becomes the Queen. The Hall Committee is the judge.

Into three groups please. Pick your officers to run your team. Lets start tomorrow. When our district decides to do something it does not muck around.

Who said lets start tomorrow?

Within half an hour each team had worked out how it was going to raise money and had ideas as to whom should be asked to become their princess.

Patricia was appointed as the Beach Princess. Her father was chairman of the Beach Committee. Our Tom was to be the secretary treasurer. Several other active persons agreed to help and work began on the Beach plan.

The Carnival started with a dance put on by the Hall Committee to present the three Princesses. The takings of this function were split three ways to form the opening credits for each team.

Tom's committee had an advantage. There was an empty house belonging to the chairman which was available for fund raising evenings. Yes, they could use the hall but other teams would also want to use it and the Hall Committee had said that each function held in the hall would have to pay the normal hall rental.

The methods of raising money chosen by the Beach team were mainly illegal. The local Constable would know what happened at Queen Carnivals but as the profits were small amounts being raised for a worthy cause, he did not ask awkward questions. All the same the fund raising at the house used by the Beach consisted of

HOUSIE - ILLEGAL

SPINNING WHEEL - ILLEGAL

RAFFLES GALORE - NOT REGISTERED

CROWN AND ANCHOR. - VERY MUCH AGAINST THE LAW

AND BEER. - SOLD WITHOUT ANY LICENSE AT ALL.

The fact that the other teams also offended should not have been an excuse.

Crown and Anchor

Tom's first function was held at the hall. Euchre was played in the Supper Room. A local pianist played for the dancing. Various raffles were held. And in one side room, a Crown and Anchor board was operating. And it was that board which caused Tom's first set back as the Treasurer.

Nobody on the Beach Committee knew how to run a Crown and Anchor board. Another person living in the district said he knew how and his offer was accepted.

Some cash for a float was made available and the betting began. Tom soon got back the float and the board seemed to be earning money.

Half way through the evening the Banker of the Crown and Anchor board came running to Tom. He was most sorry but they had a bit of bad luck. A triple came up and we had to pay up thirty five pounds.

There was no money left so I closed the board. Once again he said that he was sorry and left the hall.

Tom urgently looked around his helpers. Does any of them know anything about Crown and Anchor?

His Chairman's son said that he had a fair idea so the two of them went to have a look.

The correct method of not losing money on such a board is to balance the betting so that an equal amount is bet on each square. This had not been done and a heavy bet on one square had cleaned out the bank.

The board was started again but with a limit on betting set on each player. The banker encouraged betters to use every square. By the time that the evening was over the board had recovered the thirty five pounds and a profit was made.

This mishap was in some ways an advantage for the Beach team. The district heard about this large loss and thought that this would spoil any chance of the Beach team winning. In fact there was no loss and the Beach team became very careful in checking the results of their fund raising.

Tom became very happy with the way that the Beach fund raising was going. He had some doubt about the selling of beer at the cottage. It made a small profit and it brought some people in and there were hangers on prepared to drink any leftovers. But the room used had to be washed out and locked up after each evening. At least the barman had been very firm and there weren't any arguments.

Even with a good final scrubbing that wash house smelt of beer for the next three months.

The Winner

One activity that raised more than expected was a Bring and Sell Auction held at the hall.

Supporters were asked to give things that could be auctioned.

But then one rather stout matron bought a large box of chocolates three times and gave it back to be auctioned again. The idea caught on. Nearly every item that was brought to that auction was returned to the auctioneer to be sold again and again.

As the final night approached Tom gave some thought as to how he should hand in the final funds on the closing night. Tom held back funds so that other teams thought that Beach was still behind. Because of that thirty five pound loss.

Tom went along to the Hall Committee secretary and arranged to pay in most of the funds that he held. If he could pay it into the Hall account he could hold on to the receipted pay in slip and hand that over on the final night. The answer was yes and Tom paid in fifty pound next time he was in town.

On the night the Bush team thought that they were slightly ahead. Especially as they handed in the most cash on the final night.

But just before closing time Tom handed over the bank pay in slip.

The final count was...

Beach £125, Bush £100, Maori £60

Hurrah! Beach had won and the grand total was more than the two hundred and fifty pounds needed. The Beach Princess did not marry Tom, but six months later she did marry the eldest son of Tom's sharemilker.

The Gala Day

Tom is counting the money in his purse. A two bob and three sixpences, not much for a Gala. His father overhears him and says. "I won't be going but the Gala is for a worthy cause, here is ten bob to spend but don't bring any rubbish back."

Tom says "Thanks." He decides that he should wear his sports clothes but without a tie. Gala Days are not formal affairs.

The Gala was for a worthy cause. World War II had been going for four years and a patriotic fund had been formed locally to provide comforts for the troops serving overseas.

Our district was going a step further, as well as sending gloves, scarves, and tins of cake it had a separate fund. This was a fund, which was to give every returned soldier in the district a cheque for forty pounds when they arrived back.

The Gala was to help build up this fund.

Tom walked to the Gala. It was less than half a mile away from his home and other residents would be walking a greater distance. Petrol was rationed though farmers were allowed a little extra for taking their milk to the factory.

However cows were dry at this time of the year and trucks and tractors had enough fuel to drive to the Gala. They would all be crowded with neighbours hitching a ride.

Cost Tom two shillings at the gate. He thought that paying a gate fee was a waste of time, as all the money in his pocket would be spent at the Gala anyway.

First he had a walk around the Domain where the Gala was being held. Half the area was being taken up by the horses and their hurdles. Tom was not very interested in horses. He would leave that to his cousin Charlie who was horse mad. He was sure to have entered a couple of horses.

Hullo, looks as though there is going to be chopping and sawing events. Tom went closer to have a look. Large pine logs had been buried in the ground with two feet showing. The competitors were looking at their contest blocks and nailing them on to the pine logs.

Tom knew Bill who lived on the top road. He was looking at his block closely. "What are you looking for Bill?" Tom asked. Bill replied that he was looking for any sign of a knot. "It slows you down if the grain was twisted. This block looks alright."

Bill replied as he started to nail down his block. Bill then fixed the overhead tape to the top of his block. When Bill had chopped through his block the tape would fly up into the air.

The first tape seen up in the air would show the judges who had finished first.

Bill said that he needed a partner for the cross cut sawing. Tom was not interested. He knew that Bill was pulling his leg. He politely said "No." After all he was still at High School and he did not have the muscles or skill for competitive sawing.

Tom moved on to look at some of the other competitions and stalls.

There was guessing the weight of a sheep. A sheep with a rather woolly fleece was held in a pen. Tom guessed that it was a hogget. How much did a fleece weigh?

He took a guess, divided it by three and multiplied it by two. He paid his fee and wrote down his guess. He did not expect to win the sheep, which was the prize.

Stepping the chain was the next competition. Tom had seen his father measuring the area of a paddock by counting the steps that he made both down and across the area. Multiplying the two figures ended up with the area in acres. Every farmer needed to know the length of his stride and how to walk a chain.

Tom had two attempts. He took long strides and found that he was some feet ahead of any other competitors mark. Then he took normal steps and he was at least three feet short. He would have to practise judging distances more accurately.

He went and bought some raffle tickets. The cakes and groceries could not be called rubbish if he happened to win them.

He bought a couple of pies and a bottle of soft drink for lunch. Then he looked around to see how he could spend the rest of his money.

He tried his luck at HOOPLA and ringed some of the prizes. But he did not ring the bases so his throws did not count.

With his sports clothes he was not going to try the greasy pole or to chase the greasy pig. Being hit by an opponent with a sack of straw meant to knock him to the ground did not appeal.

He got as much fun watching the chasing of the greasy pig as he would have had if he had taken part. The pig escaped by running ahead and then diving into growth behind the bowling club. It came out later and some of its pursuers came around behind and chased it back towards the crowd.

It was tackled from the side by a teenage rugby football player who was named the new owner of the pig. Tom didn't think that the teenager had bought a ticket but he was the only one able to catch the pig.

It was getting late and Tom was down to his last sixpence. The only sixpenny competition left was the fishing wall. Here every child got a prize. Tom cast his line and caught a rubber duck.

He had spent all his money with the Gala and now he would have company in his bath.

Tug of War

Tug of war was a very active sport in the 1930's and 1940's and every district on the Coast had at least one team.

We had a five man team of 1000 pounds and we had a very good coach. There was no formal competition but when a team has not been beaten it can call itself "The top team". But to be the Top Team we needed to beat Opunake. They too had met and beaten all the other teams except us.

I arranged a challenge against Opunake to be held on our Gala Day at the domain. Because all our members were involved in running the Gala, the tug of war would have to be the last event. We would not be able to have the usual two repeats after an hours rest. There wouldn't be time. It would have to be one pull and the winner would be the top team.

If the Opunake team came by the afternoon bus we could have our match and then they would be put up for the night with team members. They could catch the return bus back to Opunake in the morning. I guessed we would be the first challenge for Opunake next year.

We checked our gear. We picked a level area of grass and mowed it. We arranged with the bowling club to use their rooms for changing and storing our gear.

Our rope was regulation, 35 feet long and one inch in diameter. It had the centre area marked with the neutral 6 foot six marks. We fixed the matching six foot six marking board firmly into the ground. The pointer could be fixed in on the day. The movement of the pointer fixed on the rope outside the neutral area of the ground board showed who was the winner.

We asked the Okato referee to act as final judge. By 4:30 the teams were ready to start.

While the match was not part of any competition it was agreed that it would follow the rules drawn up in the 1924 Olympic tug of war matches.

Briefly they said...

Teams of 5 weigh not more than 1000 pounds would use a 35 foot rope in a suitable area. There would be two marks on the rope 6 foot 6 inches apart and there would be matching marks on the floor underneath the rope.

The winning team must pull the opposing team across the boundary of these marks. Shoes and boots were not to have soles protruding out from the uppers.

Ready, set, pull by the referee was the starting signal. Coaches were allowed to advise their team. They helped to plan their teams tactics and to read the tactics of the opposing team.

Two different forces present in tug of war. There is the pull, which comes from the weight of the players as they push their feet into the ground. The tug, comes from the muscles of the players. The secret is to match the pull with the tug.

Grapevine said that the Opunake team's plan was to combine pull and tug and win in the first seconds of the game.

Our plan was to resist this and look for a better time to make our maximum effort. This was what happened this time. We held out against Opunake's initial pull and when our coach saw that they were relaxing to build up strength again he signalled for us to tug our hearts out. And it worked. The pointer moved over to our side and the referee pointed at us as the winners,

Charlie was an unusual choice for the team. He only weighed seven stone and as he took fourth place the opposing team could hardly see him. The team was picked so that we made the team weight of 1000 pounds. The other four members were always bigger and heavier than the opposition members.

By going home early Tom had missed an exciting finish to the Gala. Most of the crowd had stayed and the cheering at the end was loud and enthusiastic.

Charlie has a medal in his personal memory box, which says...

Winner Tug of War Coastal Gala 1943

Charlie

Hi! My name is Charlie. I am a cousin of Tom Kerr who mentioned me in his story about our Gala. I agree Tom knows nothing about horses and what is more he doesn't really know much about Galas. They finish when they finish not when Tom runs out of money and goes home.

A very important contest was fought out after Tom left. At four o'clock that afternoon Gibson's Bus stopped outside the Domain and a Tug Of War team from Opunake got off. They were looking for us and our team.

I was on the committee running the Gala. Most of them were old hands at this sort of thing and the Programme was decided quickly. "Charlie you can run the Horse Events' Sale as you did last year." Charlie had his instructions "OK" he replied.

Last year we had steer wrestling and the mothers had made quite a lot of noise after somebody broke his leg. I pointed this out and said that he thought that we should stick with horses this year.

The usual stalls and competitions were suggested and people were selected to run them.

Then somebody had a bright idea. The district had a strong Tug of War Team this year. "You are on the team Charlie. A demonstration would create interest. You could organise something."

Charlie felt that he had enough on his plate with the horses. But you don't say something like that.

We have eight people in the squad and ten would be needed to show how Tug of War worked. That fixed that idea.

But while the rest of the Committee were tossing other thoughts around I had my bright idea for the year. We had won every contest this year but we had not pulled against Opunake. And they were in the same position of not having been beaten.

What if we asked Opunake to come up and have a Tug of War to see who was best. Wouldn't cost much and if the committee bought six medals. The medals could say "Winner Tug of War Coastal Gala 1943." That would be all the prizes needed for the contest.