

Motueka Valley Association Newsletter

the river, the land, the people

September 2021

Community-Owned Pokororo Hall

Community Halls are important meeting places particularly in rural areas. In the past, halls have been hubs for socialisation, education, communication and in the event of emergency situations, like floods and fires, for evacuation points and for help and support. They are still that, but with easier travel into towns now for sport and other interests, changing generations, the internet and Facebook, the focus and role of community halls has lessened.

Near the confluence of the Graham River and Motueka River stands the Pokororo Hall. The site where the hall stands is where the fourth Pokororo School had been built in 1914. It functioned there as a school until 1939. After that time, the school building was used by a piano committee. In 1947 the site was purchased by the community from the Nelson Education Board for 20 pounds. Locals were canvassed and raised the funds themselves. In 1955 builders Strachan and Wells built the current hall with local help.

According to Ed Stevens' Historical Recordings:

"An evergreen oak grew at the old Pokororo school site adjacent to Campbell Beatson's farm. As a sapling it was pulled out and towed up the road, roots and all, to be planted at the present Pokororo Hall Trust site. Cyril and Ash Heath did the removal. In 1973 Mervyn Heath and Basil Mytton cleared, graded and levelled the road edge to improve the site. Macrocarpas remain there still in

2001 excepting one which Les Maas removed in 1996 for safety reasons..."

Pokororo Hall was used regularly by the local community. From the 1957 Pokororo Hall meeting minutes, there were many groups using the hall: Pokororo Cricket Club, Pokororo Indoor Bowls, Pokororo Women's Club, Pokororo Men's Club, Pokororo Table Tennis Club, a card committee and Dance nights.

The Pokororo Men's Club organised the annual River Raft race down Motueka River from Baton Bridge. The first race started from a challenge by local tobacco grower Cos Newman's staff to Pokororo Men's Club. The race involved only two rafts. To decide who would be on their raft, the Men's club held a ballot. The Men's Club raft won the race as Newman's raft got stuck on a rock at the mouth of the Graham River. The Annual Motueka River Raft race was very popular and ran for a number of years. It was 'officially' stopped for Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) reasons.

In January 1975, the Men's Club together with the Pokororo Women's Club initiated and organised the first Pokororo Art and Craft Fair. At first it was a two day event showcasing the work and talent of local artisans - pottery, woodwork and other crafts. It later became a one day event and finished-up in 2018:

"It was a unique fair because it was only open to people in the valley to showcase and sell their work...but it lost local flavour, there were less stall holders so it was



decided not to run it again...We [Pokororo Hall Trust] are living off the proceeds of the fair at the moment”, says Alan Benseman, a Pokororo Hall Trust committee member.

Alan has been a member for 40 years in various committee positions. He fondly remembers the Christmas parties where it was the job of the Men’s Club to provide a tree and Santa, the Women’s Club to provide refreshments and all the parents to bring a present to be put under the tree which Santa would then give to every child.

Barry Heath, having lived in the Valley all his life, remembers biking past the hall when it was being built on his way into high school. He has fond memories of the Christmas parties at the hall also:

“Santa used to arrive on all sorts of means - one year Santa came on a pet reindeer...another he came in a helicopter...”.

As the helicopter arrived, Santa gave the children a lolly scramble from above. Santa was Bill Friedrich, the local rural postie and Pokororo Men’s Club member. Les Maas, the helicopter pilot was also a Men’s Club member.

Barry recalls the hall was used a lot for socialising:

“We used to have a lot of parties there before 10 o’clock closing came in. I remember walking down the Graham Valley on frosty evenings to go to Saturday night cards too. We had dart teams, fancy-dress parties and End of Harvest parties when the tobacco season finished in March...”.

As Barry explains:

“Tobacco farmers worked in little groups - a group in the Graham Valley, a group in the Pearse Valley and a group between the two valleys. Three or four farmers used to work in together to pool their staff so at the end of season they’d put on a function for all the staff...they were some wild, hair-raising parties”.

Jan Heath came to the valley when she married Barry and she was an early member of the Pokororo Women’s Club. She remembers the hall as being the centre for new people to meet:

“The Men’s Club and the Women’s Club would organise good social events, like the 50 year celebration of the Women’s Club, which kept the locals together...we’d have a barbecue outside, and everyone would bring a plate...”.

These days, community activity at the Pokororo Hall is far less:



Pokororo Women’s Club 50 years celebration at Dunbar Estate

“Within the last three years we had 16 bookings, mainly family gatherings in the afternoon and some parties in the evening, some even overnight”, Sylvia Arnold says.

Sylvia, a Pokororo Hall Trust committee member, looks after the key and manages hall bookings. The committee meets only as needed and holds its AGM every three years. At the last AGM in July, it was decided to try and rouse community spirit for the hall by holding a **‘Meet Your Neighbour’** event planned for **Saturday 16th October, 7pm.**

“Hopefully it will be an evening where neighbours new and old can connect and reconnect, long-standing residents and newer residents can kind of have a get-together...”, says Sue Thompson who is helping to organise the event:

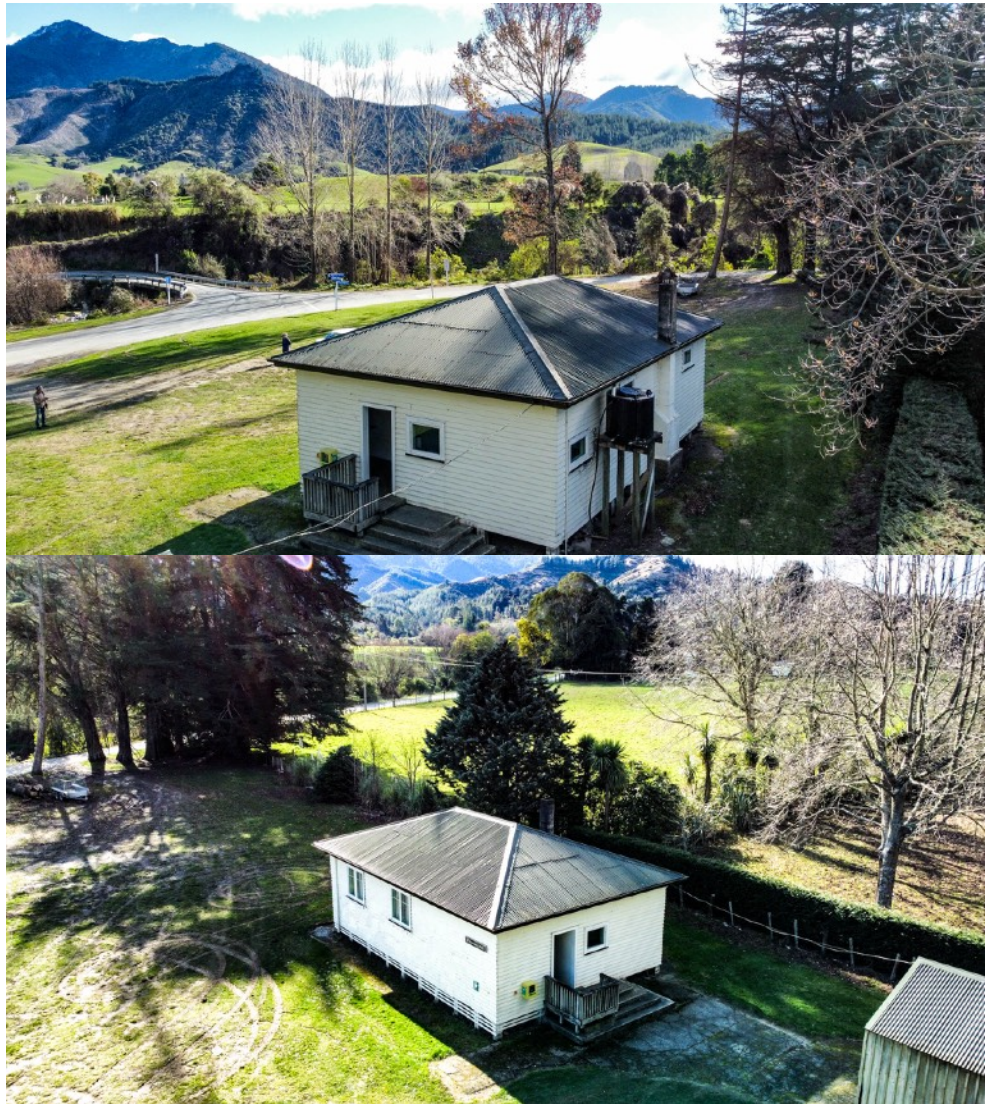
“The key message we want to share is that it’s a community-owned hall for the community and how might people want to use it.”

Sue has lots of ideas for how the hall could be used as a gathering place, for exercise classes where each participant takes the class, a youth club, and a mothers club, as examples. And also as a harvest hub:

“In summer when everyone has lots of harvest, excess harvest can be swapped or traded. In Autumn, there could be a similar swap or trade day of our preserves.”, Sue enthuses, *“It would be great to see it as a bit of a hub. People can come up with any idea they’d like to use the hall for...”.*

Also, importantly, Motueka Valley Defibrillator group have one of the AED’s (Automated External Defibrillator) for use in an emergency stored on the outside wall of the Hall. The other two are at Ngatimoti Community Room and Woodstock Hall.

As to the future of the hall, Alan would like to see the hall supported by the local community considering that: *“...there’s a responsibility there for the hall to be used...”.* Both Alan and Barry suggest the hall could be used as a stop for cyclists when the cycle trail finally goes through:



“...The cyclists could stop for a break, have a barbecue. Having decent toilets would help as they are only long-drop toilets - it’s very limited at present because of its facilities”, says Barry.

Sue and Sylvia are hoping to have a survey out soon on the Motueka Valley Residents Facebook page. This will be to get an idea of the views and interests of residents about the future of the Pokororo Hall. All residents are invited to come along to **Meet Your Neighbour at Pokororo Hall on Saturday 16th October, 7pm onwards** and enjoy an evening together. BYO and please bring a supper plate to share.

Fiona Nelson - Reporter



Motueka Valley Association

Meetings every 2nd Wednesday of the month at 8pm (7.30pm in winter) in the Ngatimoti Community Rooms.
Everyone welcome!

For community concerns email the MVA at info@mva.org.nz or contact any of the following **committee members**:

Peter Laufkotter	526 8554
Fiona Nelson	020 4160 1968
Joel Briffault	021 0284 7245
Fay Knight	022 320 0449

local halls/facilities

Ngatimoti Memorial Hall

• Bex Douglas • 021 173 1279 •
ngatimoti.hall@gmail.com

Ngatimoti Community Rooms • Sarah
Bradshaw • 526 8026

Pokororo Hall • Sylvia Arnold • 526 8282

Woodstock Hall • Kerry Hall • 543 3884

about your newsletter

- delivered on the 1st Thursday of the month to 500 homes in the Motueka Valley from February to December
- send stories, photos & ads by the 20th of the month to the editor, Seiji Kubo:
newsletter@mva.org.nz
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No MVA meeting in September

MOTUEKA VALLEY ASSOCIATION AGM

[Wednesday, 11th October, 7pm](#)

- Update on 3 Water Reform
- Cycle Trail Update Nick Ross

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Notification of AGM

The Motueka Valley Defibrillator Group will hold their AGM on Thursday, 16 September. The meeting will start promptly at 7:30 pm at the Ngatimoti Community Rooms (at the Fire Station). Public welcome! Gloria Anderson, Chairperson

BEE SWARMS

Please ring Bernd our local beekeeper at [03 5268545](tel:035268545) or [02102212313](tel:02102212313) to come and collect and provide a good home for them!

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Location of AEDs in Motueka Valley

- **Woodstock Automotive (Kerry Hall)**
1982 Dovedale Road, Woodstock Junction.
- **Ngatimoti Community Rooms/Fire Station**
Motueka Valley Highway next to Ngatimoti School
- **Pokororo Hall**
West Bank Road at corner of Graham Valley Road

Motueka Valley Defibrillator Group is a registered charity (CC50792). Donations towards the maintenance of the AEDs can be made to: Motueka Valley Defibrillator Group, NBS acc # 03-1354-0474291-00 or contact Gloria Anderson, chairperson, on 526 8644 for more information.



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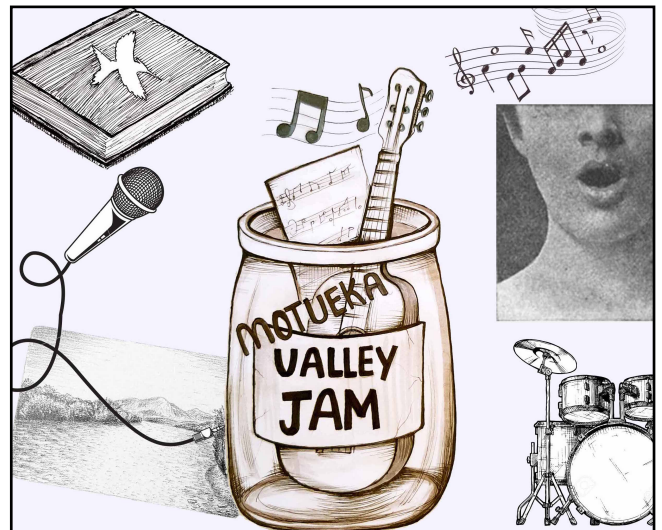
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