KUMEU SHOWGROUNDS

OUR PLACE-OUR SPACE

EST.

1921

IN 1921 A GROUP OF LOCAL FARMERS WERE AWARE THAT WARKWORTH AND HELENSVILLE HELD ANNUAL SHOWS AND THOUGHT "WHY COULDN'T KUMEU DO THE SAME?" ONE MAN WAS MR KINLOCH (FAMILY LINKS TO DEACON AND ANNANDALE ROADS), WHO OWNED THE LAND WHERE WESTERN ITM NOW STANDS ON THE MAIN ROAD IN KUMEU. NEXT DOOR WAS BUCKLAND'S SALEYARDS (SHORTLY TO BECOME Z-ENERGY) AND THE TWO LAND OWNERS OFFERED TO LEND THEIR PROPERTIES TO HOLD THE FIRST KUMEU SHOW. IT WAS BY FAR THE BIGGEST EVENT THE KUMEU DISTRICT HAD EVER HELD.
A MEETING OF AN ENTHUSIASTIC GROUP OF 30 ELECTED **RICHARD KINLOCH** THE FIRST PRESIDENT AND HONORARY VETERINARIAN OF THE KUMEU AGRICULTURAL & HORTICULTURAL SHOW SOCIETY. **STEVE HANHAM** WAS THE FIRST SECRETARY. THE NEW SOCIETY'S HORTICULTURAL DESIGNATION WAS REPUTEDLY THE FIRST AMONGST AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES AND SHOWED HOW IMPORTANT FRUIT-GROWING HAD BECOME IN THE DISTRICT IN JUST FIVE YEARS.

THE FIRST KUMEU AGRICULTURAL & HORTICULTURAL SHOW WAS HELD ON SATURDAY, 19TH MARCH 1921 IN KINLOCH'S PADDOCK AND THE BUCKLAND'S YARDS. ALL THE LOCAL PEOPLE WERE THERE, TRAVELLING BY HORSE AND WAGON, BUGGY AND CART, OR BY FOOT. TENTS WERE ERECTED ALONG THE MACROCARPA FENCE LINES TO HOUSE THE SIDESHOWS AND COMPETITION DISPLAYS. THE RAILWAY MEANT PEOPLE COULD EASILY VISIT FROM ALL POINTS NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE KAIPARA LINE. MAORI ATTENDED FROM REWETI AND FURTHER NORTH. EVERYONE DRESSED IN THEIR BEST CLOTHES, MEN IN SUITS, WOMEN IN THEIR HATS AND COATS. POPULAR SONGS OF THE DAY COULD BE HEARD FROM THE 25-PIECE BAND HIRED TO PLAY IN THE BACKGROUND THROUGHOUT THE DAY. CHILDREN WERE THRILLED BY THE OCCASION AND SOME OF THE BOYS HAD THE JOB OF SELLING SHOW CATALOGUES AT THE GATES, RECEIVING ONE PENNY FOR EACH ONE SOLD. HOT WATER, HEATED IN A COPPER, WAS FREE AND COULD BE COLLECTED IN TEAPOTS. FOR THOSE WHO HAD NOT BROUGHT THEIR LUNCH, THE LADIES COMMITTEE PROVIDED MORNING TEA, LUNCH AND AFTERNOON TEA THROUGHOUT THE DAY.

IN THE EVENING, **THE SHOW DANCE, UNDOUBTEDLY THE BIGGEST DANCE EVENT OF THE YEAR, WAS HELD IN THE KUMEU HALL**, DECORATED WITH FERN AND NIKAU BRANCHES. ALONG WITH THE HALLS, THE SCHOOLS AND THE CHURCHES, THE AGRICULTURAL & HORTICULTURAL SHOW SOCIETY QUICKLY BECAME ONE OF THE DISTRICT'S PRIMARY INSTITUTIONS. COMMITTEE MEMBERS PROVIDED FOR DEEPER SOCIAL CONTACT THAN WAS USUALLY POSSIBLE DURING MOST FARMERS' AND ORCHARDIST' LONG AND OFTEN ISOLATED WORKING DAY. ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF BEING A DAIRY FARMER, HOWEVER, WAS THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO LEAVE THE FARM BETWEEN MILKINGS, AND SO WORKING BEES AND VOLUNTARY WORK WERE OFTEN DONE BETWEEN 10AM AND 3PM. THE SHOW SOCIETY DEPENDED ENTIRELY ON THE VOLUNTARY EFFORTS OF ITS MEMBERS, AND THIS MEANT AN INORDINATE AMOUNT OF WORK JUST BEFORE THE SHOW ITSELF. KINLOCH'S PADDOCK HAD TO BE MOWED AND CLEARED OF GORSE, TENTS ERECTED AND THE STEWARDS HAD TO PREPARE EVERYTHING FOR THEIR PARTICULAR CLASS OF COMPETITION.
THE BIGGEST JOB WAS PROBABLY PREPARING FOR THE WOOD-CHOPPING CONTEST. THE FIRST REQUIREMENT WAS FOR SOMEONE TO VOLUNTEER TREES FROM THEIR PROPERTY. THESE WERE FELLED AND CUT INTO LENGTHS WITH AXES. THE BLOCKS WERE THEN MEASURED, LOADED, AND DELIVERED TO THE SHOWGROUND. IF SIX TREES WERE BEING USED, IT MIGHT TAKE THE VOLUNTEER A WEEK TO DO THE WORK.

1927 - TEA ROOM BUCKLAND LENT £100 FOR THE SOCIETY TO BUILD A TEA ROOM TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR SALE YARD PATRONS, CATTLE DROVERS AND AUCTIONEERS ETC. "THE SHOW SOCIETY LADIES' COMMITTEE CONTINUED RUNNING THE TEAROOM TWICE A WEEK BUT IT SOON BECAME A BURDEN RATHER THAN THE SOCIAL DAY IT ALWAYS HAD BEEN. THE GENERATION OF WOMEN WHO HAD DONE THE WORK FOR SO LONG WERE ALSO BECOMING OLDER AND, AS MANY LEFT THE DISTRICT OR WERE UNABLE TO CONTINUE HELPING, IT BECAME HARDER TO GET VOLUNTEERS TO RUN THE TEAROOMS. THE RODNEY COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH INSPECTORS ASSESSED THE TEAROOMS AS INSANITARY AND NEEDING TO BE UPGRADED. DURING 1979, THE TEAROOM WORK WAS TAKEN OVER BY A YOUNGER GENERATION OF WOMEN AT THE PLUNKET SOCIETY. THE SHOW SOCIETY CHARGED $500 A YEAR RENTAL AND PLUNKET TOOK OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR BUILDING MAINTENANCE. THROUGH THE TEAROOMS, THE WOMEN OF THE SHOW SOCIETY HAD EARNED IT'S SECOND LARGEST SOURCE OF INCOME APART FROM THE SHOW DAY GATE TAKINGS. DURING THE 1990S, THE EXPANDING KUMEU-HUAPAI COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL CENTRE LED TO THE SALE YARDS BEING RELOCATED TO A MORE RURAL AREA JUST NORTH OF WESTGATE. IN SPITE OF THIS MOVE, IT IS STILL KNOWN AS THE KUMEU SALE.

1930 - DEPRESSION TIMES A MEETING WAS CALLED TO DISCUSS IF THE SHOW WAS TO CONTINUE. THE VOTING WAS 6 TO CONTINUE AND 6 TO NOT, WITH THE CHAIRMAN'S VOTE ADDING TO THE "CONTINUES".

1931 - STILL DEPRESSION TIMES ANOTHER MEETING FOR THE SAME PURPOSE - THIS YEAR 9 VOTED TO CONTINUE AND 6 NOT. PROGRESS!

1932 - THEFT AN OFFICE HOLDER ABSCONDED WITH THE GATE TAKINGS. THERE WAS NO PRIZE MONEY AVAILABLE THAT YEAR.

1942 - SHOW CANCELLED FOLLOWING THE SHOCK OF THE JAPANESE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOUR IT WAS DECIDED TO CANCEL THE SHOW THAT YEAR. IT WAS RE-INSTIGATED THE FOLLOWING YEAR BUT RATIONING MEANT THAT THE 1942 PROGRAMME HAD TO BE OVERPRINTED AND REWRITTEN TO SAVE PAPER!

1946 - VICTORY SHOW ALL RETURNED SERVICEMEN AND WIVES WERE INVITED TO THE SHOW AND DANCE FREE OF CHARGE.

1948 - 42-ACRE FARM PURCHASED IN KUMEU FROM JIM ATTWOOD RAISING MONEY FROM MEMBERS AT £5 DEBENTURES OVER 10 YEARS. THE SHOW'S SECRETARY BILL PATERSON RENTED THE ATTWOOD HOUSE AND STARTED PLANNING THE GROUND ALTERATIONS.

1949 - SHOW HELD IN KINLOCH'S PADDOCK AND BUCKLAND SALEYARD HUAPAI HAD A HOTEL, GROCERY STORE AND SMALL BUTCHERS SELLING MEAT FROM BRIGHAMS CREEK AND HELENSVILLE. KUMEU HAD A HALL, POST OFFICE, ONE STORE, ONE GARAGE AND RAILWAY STATION. 21.7 MILES TO AUCKLAND VIA HENDERSON AND NEW LYNN - NO MOTORWAY. IMAGINE HOW THE SHOW ORGANISERS FELT AT THE SIGHT OF THE "SHOW SPECIAL" TRAIN ARRIVING AT KUMEU STATION, DISGORGING SEVERAL HUNDRED PASSENGERS AT THE SHOW'S RAILWAY GATES, RETURNING SEVERAL HOURS LATER FROM HELENSVILLE TO RETURN THEM TO SWANSON AND AUCKLAND.

1950 - FIRST SHOW IN ACCESS ROAD MEMBERS DISMANTLED THE SHOW BUILDING AND TRANSFERRED IT TO THE SHOW'S OWN LAND IN ACCESS ROAD FOR THE MARCH SHOW.

1951 - PEARSON FARM PURCHASED THE ADJACENT FARM OF 60 ACRES WAS PURCHASED, AGAIN USING DEBENTURES, BUT OF £525 AND £50 AT 4.50% WITH A MATURING DATE 1962 - 10 YEARS. DEBENTURES FROM MEMBERS WERE REPAID IN 1958 AND 1962. THE PEARSON'S EXISTING SHAREMILKER WAS ENGAGED TO FARM THE PROPERTY.

1952 - HORSE ARENA AND TRACK EARTHWORKS DONE.

1962 - 20 ACRES SOLD TO THE FORESTRY RESEARCH ORCHARD DEBENTURE REPAYMENT STRETCHED THE SHOW'S FINANCES AND IT WAS DECIDED TO SELL LAND TO MAKE THE SHOWGROUNDS DEBT FREE. DERRY REMEMBERS HIS FATHER "ROLLING OVER" HIS DEBENTURES TO HELP THE RESEARCH. DERRY UNDERSTAND THE SHOWGROUNDS HAS A FIRST OPTION IF THE RESEARCH 20 ACRES EVER BECOMES AVAILABLE.

UNTIL ABOUT 1965 THE "SHOW DANCE" WAS STILL THE TOP EVENT OF THE SOCIAL YEAR. PRIZE GIVING WAS INCLUDED AND YOUNG LADS COLLECTING EMPTY BEER BOTTLES THE DAY AFTER, AT ONE PENNY EACH, DID WELL - I KNOW - I WAS ONE OF THEM! I SPOKE TO A LADY RECENTLY WHOSE FATHER USED TO M.C. THE DANCES ABOUT 1950, AND SHE CAN REMEMBER THE ANNUAL SHOW WAS SUCH AN EVENT THAT HER MOTHER MADE HER A NEW DRESS FOR EACH SHOW DAY.

1981 - 1 ACRE OF LAND SOLD TO THE RODNEY DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR THE BUILDING OF A DISTRICT WIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE. THIS WAS THE LAST TIME THE SHOWGROUNDS SOLD ANY LAND, AND HAVE TAKEN MEASURES TO SECURE THE PROPERTY FOR SHOWGROUND TYPE USAGE.

AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT - "THE SHOW ITSELF CONTINUED TO GROW. ITS MEMBERSHIP GREW EACH YEAR, AND BEING JUST A COMFORTABLE DRIVE FROM TOWN, IT ATTRACTED MANY AUCKLANDERS, WHO WERE INTRIGUED TO VISIT A 'REAL' COUNTRY SHOW FOR AN HOUR OR SO. OTHER SHOWS LIKE HELENSVILLE AND WARKWORTH, WHILE STILL SUCCESSFUL, REMAINED RELATIVELY SMALL. RIGHT UP UNTIL THE MID-1990S, THE SOCIETY WAS STILL RUN LARGELY BY MEN WHO HAD JOINED ALONGSIDE THEIR FATHERS DURING THE 1930S AND 1940S. **ROBERT SINTON** WAS PRESIDENT FROM 1961 TO 1977, AND **BILL SMITH** FOLLOWED AS PRESIDENT FOR THE NEXT 19 YEARS.

1986 - RE ZONING THE SOCIETY FACED A SUBSTANTIAL THREAT TO IT'S ABILITY TO EARN INCOME FROM THE PROPERTY WHEN A RODNEY COUNTY DISTRICT SCHEME REVIEW REMOVED THE 'IDENTIFICATION' OF THE LAND AS A SHOWGROUND AND PLACED IT IN THE GENERAL RURAL ZONE. WHILE THE SOCIETY WAS ABLE TO CONTINUE USING THE PROPERTY AS FARM AND SHOWGROUND, OTHER EVENTS SUCH AS FESTIVALS, CARNIVALS AND MARKETS WERE LIMITED TO JUST THREE DAYS PER YEAR. THE NEW ZONING WOULD STOP LAND DEVELOPMENT AS A POSSIBLE SPORTS VENUE, AS WELL AS SHACKLING THE SOCIETIES ABILITY TO EARN INCOME BY USING THE VENUE FOR LARGE-SCALE PUBLIC EVENTS. THEY ENLISTED THE HELP OF LOCAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, LOCKWOOD SMITH AND DAIL JONES. TAKING CORNWALL PARK AS THEIR MODEL, THEY PROMOTED A PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL THAT WOULD ESTABLISH THE RIGHT OF THE KUMEU SHOWGROUNDS TO BE USED FOR THE WIDE RANGE OF USES IT ALWAYS HAD BEEN AND ALSO ENSURE THAT IT COULD NOT BE SUBDIVIDED AND SOLD AT A FUTURE DATE.

1991 THE ACT WAS PASSED AND WAS CALLED **A LANDMARK FOR ALL NEW ZEALAND A & P SOCIETIES** WHO HAD BEEN RESTRICTED TO RENTING THEIR PROPERTIES OR BUILDINGS FOR SHORT TERMS ONLY. THE SHOW SOCIETY IS STILL RUN ALMOST ENTIRELY BY VOLUNTEERS AND HAS CONTINUED TO DEVELOP EACH YEAR.

2002 -THE SHOW WAS EXPANDED TO TWO DAYS FOR THE FIRST TIME.

EVEN WITH THIS PARLIAMENTARY ACT IN PLACE THE SHOWGROUNDS HAS HAD TO DEFEND THE GROUNDS FROM ACQUISITION VIA THE NEW AUCKLAND CITY UNITARY PLAN.
"IN SPITE OF THESE CHANGES, THE KUMEU RIVER VALLEY IS STILL ESSENTIALLY A RURAL DISTRICT, AND THERE ARE PLACES WHERE IT IS SURPRISINGLY EASY TO IMAGINE ITS PAST. IN LATE SUMMER, MAKE THE TRIP TO THE KUMEU SHOW. VIEW THE HORSE RIDING, THE WOOD-CHOPPING, THE SHEEP AND CATTLE, THE GIANT PUMPKIN, THE PHOTOGRAPHY, AND HOME INDUSTRIES DISPLAYS. WANDER AROUND THE STALLS, SIDE-SHOWS, AND RIDES. THEN, WALK AWAY FROM THE CROWDS TO THE HIGH GROUND PAST THE BLACKSMITH'S TENT AND LOOK NORTHWARDS UP THE HAZY VALLEY. LOOKING INTO THE SUNSHINE, THE TREES AND LOW HILLS IN THE DISTANCE DEFINE THE BOUNDARIES OF THE VALLEY. IN THE HEAT OF THE AFTERNOON, IT IS SUDDENLY EASY TO SEE IT AS THE DISTRICT'S CHILDREN MIGHT HAVE 75 SUMMERS AGO. SURROUNDED BY HILLS AND THE SUMMER SHRIEK OF CICADAS, THE VALLEY WAS ISOLATED ENOUGH FOR A CHILD TO BELIEVE IT WAS ALL THERE WAS. IT WAS A WORLD WITH CREEKS TO FISH IN, BUSH AND PADDOCKS TO EXPLORE AND, ONE DAY A YEAR, THE EXCITEMENT OF SHOW DAY"

THE DISTRICT SHOULD FOREVER BE GRATEFUL TO THE SHOW PRESIDENTS OF THE PAST WHOSE COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION HAS PRESERVED THE SHOWGROUND PROPERTY FOR THE KUMEU DISTRICT, FOR THEIR GENERATION, THE PRESENT GENERATION, AND FUTURE GENERATIONS TO COME.

Abridged from the History of the Kumeu Show by Derry Faulder