

North Barrier Library Association - Port FitzRoy

Researched and written by Kay Stowell - April 2018 - Copyright ©

The first library at Port FitzRoy on Great Barrier Island was in a mail sorting room on the wharf. This room was attached to the wharf shed and inside a cupboard, built by Alfie Hansen, housed the library books. Selwyn Leroy maintained the library and after his death his sister Girlie took on the role of librarian.



At that time books were supplied by the National Library Service and the library was open once a week on boat days. In the late 1970's the wharf, including the shed, were demolished and a new wharf was built. The library books were moved to an old generator shed, just up the road from the wharf. This shed stood on road reserve and belonged to the 'Nurses Cottage'.

In 1978 Mary Blake-Palmer became the librarian, shelving was put up in the generator shed and Mary filled these with the library books which were mainly children's books, reference, biographies, preschool puzzles and jigsaws. The concrete pad for the generator dominated the shed and rats, slaters and spiders were bountiful within. For 5 years the library was available free of charge to locals and open 3 mornings a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In the early 1980's a small fee was instigated to cover the freight costs for the National Library Service books.

Eventually the shed was weatherproofed and a coat of paint was applied. Slaters and spiders were then relegated to luxurious outdoor living.



Generator Shed Library 1985



In 1986 Peta Stavelli became the community librarian and her desire was to replace the generator shed with a new library building. Permission for this was not approved by the community board and at a liquid infused dinner party a plan was hatched to erect a building under cover of darkness and see what happened. However, this wasn't necessary as permission was subsequently granted.

Fundraising began and two dances were held at the Port FitzRoy Boating Club. These dances raised about \$3,000 and \$600 was raised at an annual gala. \$4,500 was the cost of the building which was designed and built by John Lowe and many volunteers from the community.

P&D Timber from Patumahoe offered a good discount to cut and supply the timber for walls, floors and decks and they also donated the timber for the shelving. A visiting builder, Mike Waterhouse, saw the building under construction and asked if anything was needed. On the next

freight barge a set of French doors arrived, free of charge. The other recycled windows were also donated. The building required sanding and painting with many locals giving their time and energy to the project. Barry Fenn made and donated the stained glass window in the front of the building. Open Day, in the late 1980's was celebrated with champagne cocktails. Local kaumatua, Opo Ngawaka, blessed the building.

For many years the role of librarian was filled by Connie Quirk who ran the Port FitzRoy Store. She was followed by Shelley Amos, Denise LaNauze and then Kay Stowell. Over the years various library committees have formed and many people have been involved in this community venture. The library has always been run on a voluntary basis.

In 1999 all the books in the library, meticulously handwritten by Connie Quirk, were entered into a computer database by Kay Stowell. In 2003 funding was sought and received to build a step around the library deck with timber and materials generously donated by Glen Bracewell. In 2014 funds allowed for the first repaint of the library roof and in 2015 a generous donation provided for maintenance on the fascias of the deck and to replace guttering.

Books for the library are no longer sourced from the National Library Service and after years of support from community funding the library is now self-supporting. Library subs and book sale donations provide for the maintenance of the building and purchase of new books. Over the years many hundreds of books have been, and continue to be, donated to the library, with boxes often just appearing. This generosity is very much appreciated and keeps the library shelves full for the library members.

The North Barrier Library holds about 2000 books and still charges a minimal yearly subscription.

Library in 2003





1970's



1985