

# HAMILTON WORKINGMEN'S CLUB

## HONOURS BOARD



**LIFE MEMBERS:** Bob Lovell, Claude Mangan, Ron Clarke, Arthur Grant, Wally Hayes, Jim Taylor, Frank Haines, Wally Orr, Syd Allott, Trevor Smith, Barry Taylor, Eric Whiting, Ray Rouse, Les Woodhouse, Colin Sullivan. **Hon life member** – Jack Nicholls

**PATRONS:** Harold Innes, Arthur Grant, Frank Haines.

**CHAIRMAN:** 1955-58 'Mick' Langlands.

**PRESIDENTS:** 1958-1960 'Mick' Langlands; 1960-1973 Arthur Grant; 1973-1980 Trevor Smith; 1980-1985 Wally Orr; 1985-1989 Syd Allott; 1989-1990 Eric Whiting; 1990-1994 Bob Turner; 1995-1996 Colin Sullivan; 1996-2005 Brian Simpson.

### IN THE BEGINNING...

With our present constituted club nearing its 50th birthday, it is logical we should look back at the history of the workingmen's club movement in Hamilton.

It was said the original constituted Hamilton Workingmen's Club was incorporated in May, 1927. However, a detailed research of early Waikato Times files revealed a Hamilton Workingmen's Club was formed in the 1870s as the pioneers of the borough battled hard to establish themselves. Members met to share knowledge, usually through books and special manuscripts sent out from Britain. They discussed new innovations, adapted overseas ideas and plans to suit the local conditions, sought professional business assistance from fellow members as well as enjoying the new friendships club life offered.

The club usually met at Gwynne's Hamilton Hotel in Victoria St. Town councillors soon realised the value of such an organisation and supported its aims and objects.

The arrival of the railway at Frankton in 1877 saw a population boost and the tradesmen of the area were in demand as never before. The club purchased various items of 'gear' which was exchanged between members as houses

and factories were built and tools upgraded. Instruction books were kept in the club's cupboard at the hotel and had to be read on the premises. The volume of literature attracted visitors from other Waikato towns. The library grew at speed, but unfortunately all early club documents, manuals, books etc were lost in the 1898 Hamilton Hotel fire.

While several attempts were made to reform the club in the early 1900s and early 1920s, the next constituted body to carry the name was 'born' in late 1926. Solicitors were instructed to apply for incorporated society status. Stated objects were to afford for its members approved social intercourse, mutual helpfulness, mental and moral improvement and rational recreation. Other aims were to encourage and foster friendship amongst men by providing for them a reading room, billiard table, library, a commercial room where basic professional advice would be given at no charge, and also to provide such amusement and means of recreation as members from time to time decided by vote.

A half yearly meeting was held in June with the AGM in December. Entrance fee was five shillings. Annual subscription was 10 shillings or five shillings per six months or two shillings and sixpence per quarter. Special quarter nights were the nearest Friday to December 15, March 7, June 11 and September 5. The

committee was empowered to strike a levy among members at any time for expenditure approved at a general meeting. Fortnightly gatherings for members were held at the Toorak Chambers in Victoria Street. They started promptly at 8pm and ended sharply at 11pm. Only under special circumstances was an extension of time favoured.

The committee kept a close watch on those attending. They had the legal right to evict unwanted 'visitors'. No gambling, bad language, drunkenness or other misconduct was permitted. No visitor could 'use' the club more than three times in one calendar year.

A 1931 membership card lists the following officers – **President**, F J Farrell; **vice president**, R Blackie; **past presidents**, W McKenzie, S V Tyler, E H Quill; **management committee**, F Dunckley, L Ettershank, E Hamblyn, H McLaughlan, B Peace, R Roberts, F H Thomas, C E Wright; **hon auditors**, E H Quill, F H Thomas; **hon conductor and accompanist**, A E Savage; **programme committee**, R Blackie, B Peace, E H Quill, G Hepplestone, C Joll, W Hayes; **hon treasurer**, A S Stayte; **hon secretary**, W Hayes.

Membership dwindled during the years of the depression and club eventually went into recess.

A couple of post-war moves to reform a club were said to have failed because the basic 'red-

tape' requirements were not carried out to the satisfaction of the stolid authorities

However, in the mid-1950s a flicker of interest in forming a newly constituted workingmen's club soon grew into a flood of enthusiasm. Fortunately those at the helm were aware of the need to avoid the pitfalls of over-enthusiasm.

One of the club's life members, Ray Rouse, remembered the initial spark had been ignited at a gathering at Bob Langlands' house in Ulster St in early 1955.

"We used to gather there with our flagons after our regular social haunts had closed at 6pm. The idea caught on quickly. Most other areas had their own workingmen's clubs so it seemed logical to us that Hamilton should follow suit as it was felt that a civic, social, recreational, cultural, sporting and congenial amenity was lacking in the community."

Professional advice was sought. It became obvious the necessary ingredient in the mixture of ideas was for the dreamers, visionaries and idealists to combine fully with the materialists to form a balanced team to convert the idea into an established fact.

After many hours of thought and consideration, a committee of men considered to be of the right philosophy, substance and calibre were asked to meet on the evening of February 22, 1955, at the private residence

of Ron Diamond, 33 Dalethorpe Avenue, Fairfield.

Mr Diamond was a highly respected metal worker in the city. The committee comprised Messrs Diamond, business owner Leslie Joseph Becker, carpenter Lawrence Shanaghan, railway employee James B McArthur, electrical wholesaler J G Harrop, builder R L (Bob) Lovell and insurance agent Duncan Stuart 'Mick' Langlands. Apologies were received from clothier Thomas Courtenay and factory foreman Evan Philip (Phil) Exelby. Mr Harold Innes, Waikato Breweries chief executive, also attended. Meeting minutes record Mr Innes gave sound business advice and made helpful suggestions on ways and means of initially financing the operation. He explained the locker system and listed its good and bad points. Mr Diamond was appointed acting chairman and Mr Langlands acting secretary. They were given power to confer with Mr Innes and take action accordingly on potential property purchase. Mr Harrop, who represented potential members from Horotiu and Ngaruawahia, said he anticipated his group would provide approx 500 pounds in debentures. Committee members then levied themselves one pound each to cover the sundry expenses. Constitutional matters were discussed. Rules of various organisations were studied. It was felt the three basic ideals should be – A: To

do all things in the opinion of the executive and members to promote fellowship, culture and social well being and to afford members every facility possible to foster goodwill and promote friendship between all men and other such clubs. B: The club shall consist of life, honorary and floor members who shall be men of good repute and of a minimum age or over as shall be determined by the Government or licensing authority of the day. C: The club shall at all times be conducted on the basis that all members shall be treated as equals.

Next meeting was on June 21, 1955, at the home of insurance agent 'Mick' Langlands, 6 Claude St, Claudelands. Financial strategy re the purchase of a property and the move to become incorporated were the major topics. The meeting heard Mr Innes had advised the purchase price of the property they had in mind would be 8000 pounds. Alterations to make the building suitable for club purposes (billiard room, lounge, card room, extra toilets) would be between 1200 and 1500 pounds and fittings would be in the vicinity of 500 pounds making 10,000 pounds the figure to be the target of the inaugural committee. It was decided prospective members should take out a five pound debenture and a motion to arrange a general public meeting at some suitable venue was passed. The minute book recorded Messrs Langlands (chairman), Bob Lovell, Leslie

Becker, motor mechanic Edward B Purcell, Lawrence Shanaghan, Phil Exelby and Richard Andrew (Dick) Casey who was listed as a builder / labourer, were present at that meeting. Apologies were received from Ron Diamond, James B McArthur, who had been transferred to the South Island by the railways, Thomas Courtenay, J G Harrop, who was said to be promoting the proposed club at a Ngaruawahia meeting, and Harold Innes.

The Waikato Times was informed of the committee's intentions and reported on Saturday, July 2, under the heading 'Proposal to Form Workingmen's Club in City' – "The establishment of a Workingmen's Club in Hamilton is being organised and a special committee which has done a great deal of work is now in a position to call a public meeting to launch a new club. The initial difficulty of securing suitable premises has been overcome and at the meeting, if the enthusiasm is sufficient, a proposal to buy a

well-situated guest house in the vicinity of Victoria St will be put to the meeting."

The committee didn't waste time as a couple of days later a prominent front page advertisement in the Waikato Times under the heading 'Hamilton and District Workingmen's Club Inc' advised readers – "Another civic amenity to be formed. Notice to all supporters and intending members. Inaugural meeting to establish your club has been arranged by a provisional committee. Your personal attendance necessary to secure success in your own venture. Note and reserve the date – Centreway Rooms, Garden Place, Wednesday, July 6, 8pm – D Langlands convenor."

The public meeting was a huge success as the proposal to establish a club to be known as the Hamilton and Districts Workingmen's Club and incorporate the same was received enthusiastically by the more than 300 who attended. Many apologies were received.

# F. Price & Son

## LOCKSMITHS



We Feature -

- Key cutting
- Lock Repairs
- Sales of office security equipment
- Mobile service

Only 50 metres from the club's front door

15 Commerce Street, Frankton  
Hamilton Telephone 847 5500

**KEN PRICE MIKE FORBES**



**DAVE WELLER**  
Unisex Barber Shop

Phone 07-847 7085 Mobile 025-277 7934

---

*Specialising in Traditional Barber Techniques  
Precision cutting & Contemporary styling*

---

**11 Commerce St - Just by our club**  
*He likes to keep members AHEAD of the field*