

History of Old Beechmont Hall

This summary was collated from discussions with Vin Slingsby and John Ritchie. Greg MacKenzie who has an intimate knowledge of the hall was asked to contribute early in December 2014; yet to do so. Any errors and omissions are unintentional. Please contact Tom Blake on tombbeechmont@gmail.com to contribute any further information/corrections.

The old hall at 1449 Beechmont Rd was built around 1948, floor was donated by locals and made out of crows ash (got from where??). Freemans were involved. How? They did own a mill down at Lower Beechmont.

Milton Muston (Uncle of Duncan McKenzie (Greg's father) from South-west Rd was the driving force Beechmont had to get a loan from bank. Some locals (????) guaranteed at 1000 pounds each.

Land was virtually donated by Tom McKenzie to the Beechmont Hall Committee for the sum of ten shillings.

There was no lining on the walls and tarred paper on the roof. The latter was pulled down sometime in the 70s.

Gyprock walls were installed around the side in the 1970s with the ceiling put in later. The two by one timbers were put in on top of the walls to stop patrons knocking through the gyprock after imbibing too much.

Materials for the stage and latticework and rooms around the hall came from barracks at Camp Cable Rd.

Hall originally had an asbestos roof in the 1960s and the hall started to spread. The current bars were put in to keep it together.

In the 1970s, dances were held once a month and alternatively run by the PC and Hall Committee. This stopped sometime in the 1990s.

Cyclones had blown the back roof twice and the front roof (over the bar) was torn off once. Cyclone in the early 80s was one of the causes.

Cyclone bolts were then installed by volunteers. Tin wall was installed on the east side to stop rain coming underneath the building.

Roof was fixed once as it was sagging.??? when

Eric Rhodes put in 144 concrete pillars around late 1980s.

Toilets on south side were built in the late 80s, early 90s. John Ritchie did all of the plumbing and Brian Hammil did the tiling.

BSC condemned the hall for being unsafe around 2000 and insurance was difficult to obtain.

Eventually insurance was found.

A sub-committee was then formed to improve the hall (led by John Munster and Phil and Lou Rankin???).

A quote was put in to fix the building and allow sport to occur. This required additional structural works (also to raise the roof) at a cost of \$300,000. A grant of \$30,000 was obtained and had to be given back as there was not enough money to complete the works. A lot (??? How many) of the Beechmont locals donated a sum of \$100 towards the hall improvement. Estimated between \$40,000 and \$50,000 was donated to Hall by locals (late 1990s early 2000s).

A number of people manned the bar over a period of several decades; including Greg MacKenzie, George Rankin and Brian Kennedy; raising many thousands of dollars. It was well known that Brian's shots of spirits were very generous!

The hall was sold at auction in 2012 to Greg and Wendy MacKenzie for a sum of \$280,000; leaving a fund of \$400,000 which the Hall Committee voted to hand over to BRASA.

Moneys (\$40,000????) was taken out of the fund put in the kitchen, floor surface and shipping containers at Hall on Graceleigh. The Hall Committee voted to hand over the moneys to BRASA. This took place in 2012/2013???