

Extending A House That

Is 16 Homes

The launching of New Plymouth's Bingham House appeal today is, in its way, a landmark in the history of community effort in Taranaki. For it will be the first time in 22 years that the New Plymouth Council For Social Services Incorporated has asked the general public to help it with funds.

That, surely, is an achievement; for in the meantime the council has accomplished a great deal costing hard money.

To say the least, that is most unusual in times when the public is being continually asked to open its purse to community or semi-community projects.

There must have been many occasions when the

By S. G. H. Hoben

council felt it could amply justify an appeal on the grounds that it was undertaking voluntarily something for the general benefit — for we are all faced with old age, and there is nothing, absolutely nothing, we can do to stop it from coming.

But with sturdy independence the council has, up till this moment, avoided asking the public to give. And even now, as will be seen, it has again made every possible use of other financial resources before inviting the public to help it meet the cost of its latest development—the purchase of "Tuarua" next door to Bingham House and its conversion into six self-contained flats for letting at a reasonable rentals.

Cost

The council has been able to meet two-thirds of the total cost, and it is only the remaining \$6000 it is asking the public to contribute in an appeal managed by the New Plymouth Lions Club.

When the originators of Bingham House set themselves the task of providing accommodation for elderly Taranaki widows and unmarried women they had no money at all to pay for property or for the work that would necessarily have to be done.

They could have gone to the public with ample justification; for their intention was to help the community meet a problem that was serious even then on a national scale and showed every indication of becoming more serious still. Which it has.

They did not go to the

public, however.

This, then, was the situation when four far-sighted women sat down at New Plymouth to consider an idea — the provision of reasonable - rental, comfortable living quarters for elderly women without the means to buy a place of their own. It was a good idea, but the people who were discussing it had no idea of how the substantial cost of it could be met.

Founders

So there they were sitting in Mrs Janet Davie's home on May 19, 1947— Mesdames Davie, J. Bur-

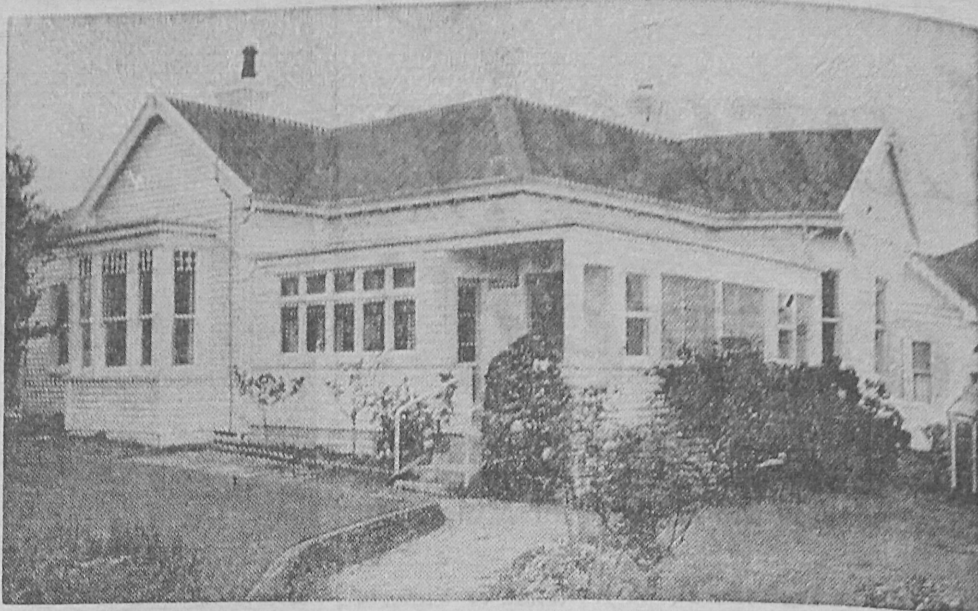


Mrs Janet Davie, one of the four New Plymouth citizens who pioneered the establishment of Bingham House.

gess, D. M. Findlay and M. G. Parker. They visualised flats that the elderly occupants could furnish with their personal belongings, where they could do for themselves and have the comfort of calling it their own home.

But the money to pay for it... They pondered. And it was then that Mrs Burgess, a member of the Vogeltown Women's Institute, thought of the Bingham Bequest. Might that be available for such a project? Well, they could try. So they decided to ask the administrator of the trust, the Public Trustee.

It should be mentioned that the prompt and practical way in which the



Council for Social Services went about achieving its aim once the Bingham Bequest became available, greatly impressed the Government of the day. During a visit to New Plymouth early in 1954 the Minister of Health, Mr J. R. Marshall, said the movement "thoroughly deserves the support of citizens."

He went further than that, however. Because of a waiting list the need for two more flats was acknowledged and Mr Marshall promised the council's board of governors the help of both a loan from the Government and a subsidy.

These were forthcoming. In the meantime private citizens had also begun to applaud the council's work, and one of them expressed his or her appreciation in the form of an anonymous gift of £500 with the suggestion that it should be used for building. There were other donations too.

Flats

Thus Bingham House came to have its present 10 flats.

But the applications for flats continued to exceed the supply, and the council was therefore gratified in 1963 to receive a bequest of £3000 under the will of Mr E. H. Edwards.

This was lodged in a building fund, for the council contemplated building more flats on its deeply-gullied section running back to Fulford Street from Bingham House. Filling of the property is going on under the supervision of Mr A. Brodie; but there are foundation problems, and in order to continue the filling, a retaining wall is necessary. This Mr J. Julian offered to construct at his own expense.

In the meantime, however, an opportunity to acquire the property next door to Bingham House arose, and it is this transaction that has produced the need for the Council for Social Services to make the present appeal to the public.

Social Need

Mrs Gladys Mary Millar's "Tuarua" property at 93 Vivian Street was put on the market. The opportunity was too good to miss. The council, through its

"Tuarua," the property that has been added to the Bingham House estate has added six new flats for elderly women.

board of governors, bought the place and converted it into six flats at a total estimated cost of \$18,000.

With the help of the Edwards bequest, the council was able to find \$6000 of this. Another \$6000 was provided by a loan from the Taranaki Savings Bank. The remaining \$6000 is being sought through public subscription, which, it should be emphasised, is the first appeal ever launched by the New Plymouth Council for Social Services, a community organisation of women — there never has been a male member — whose object is to fill a social need.

The original Bingham House project has now been enlarged to 16 flats for rental by Taranaki elderly women on a non-denominational basis. The only condition of occupancy is that the occupant is able to look after herself.

The six new flats in "Tuarua" have been occupied since the beginning of December. The Council for Social Services acknowledges that they could not have been ready as soon as that had it not been for the co-operation and planning of Mr D. H. Urquhart and his staff, and the sense of urgency with which they undertook the alterations.

Bequest

The Bingham Bequest had been created by the will of Clara Emily Mary Bingham. It was to be held in trust by the Public Trustee "until the expiration of a period of 21 years from the date of my decease or the sooner erection in New Plymouth of a home (other than one controlled by a hospital and charitable aid board) for the sole purpose, or for which one of the purposes shall be, of caring for aged women and, subject to the foregoing provisions of this clause, for such home absolutely."

The Public Trustee told the inquirers that before laying claim to the bequest they would have to form a properly - constituted society and that for this 15 signatures would be required.

The signatures were obtained by enlisting the membership of various New Plymouth women's organisations, and on September 9, 1947, there was a meeting to elect officers and adopt a constitution prepared by Mr W. Middleton and rules for application for and occupation of the flats-to-be.

Charitable

After that there was an application to the Supreme Court to determine whether the organisation qualified for the bequest. That was heard in 1950, and in December of that year Mr Justice Hay gave a reserved decision stating that the objects of the Council for Social Services would completely fulfil the terms of Mrs Bingham's bequest if before 1962 (21 years from Mrs Bingham's death) it provided a home for aged women, and no other charitable home for aged women had been previously set up.

His Honour held that a home conducted for profit would not be eligible for the bequest. He said it was clear that what Mrs Bingham had in mind was the erection of a home essentially charitable on its nature, to the exclusion of any commercial or profit-making character.

Impressed

The court's decision put the council in a position to go ahead. At a meeting on January 26, 1951, it was reported that the amount available from the bequest was £3200 (\$6400). Immediate action was taken to procure a property, and on April 27, 1951, it was announced that the former Morey family home at 95 Vivian Street (now Bingham House) had been bought for £4540 (\$9080).

After this the conversion of the house into flats was begun almost immediately. The house itself was made into six more flats and a housekeeper's flat, each with a bed-sitting room and kitchenette and two more flats were added. Hot water and bath and lavatory were provided within the rental, but the tenants were expected to pay for the electricity they used.

The cost of the property, alterations and additions was £6220. Towards this there was a Government subsidy of £1850 and a State Advances Corporation loan of £2550. The council was able to pay off a mortgage of £1400 held by the Taranaki Savings Bank.

Letters to the editor

Anzac Day

It is an accepted fact that time marches on, and now another Anzac Day has

Letters sent to the Editor for publication should preferably be typed, otherwise they must be written in black ink on one side of the paper.

meeting of the Ministers

Present—the Lord and Ministers per attendance

tainment for people who would otherwise be left with nothing to do. Rather than protest, shouldn't the Minis-

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