



Hall renovation reveals old graffiti treasures

Graffiti from 90 years ago has been revealed during renovation work at the Te Horo Hall.

One small section written in pencil and dated May 5, 1934, has two signatures. One is not known but the other is identified as Tom Empson.

Hall committee member Grant Robertson recognised Tom's name from a well-known Te Horo family. Tom would have been 12 at the time. A later generation of the Empsons recently supported the hall fundraising effort by hosting a walk across their current farm.

Tom went on to receive a Distinguished Flying Cross in the Second World War and later wrote what is regarded as the definitive history on the early development of Te Horo and Te Horo School.

Several larger sections of painted graffiti were also uncovered, the most dramatic being "Joey loves Colleen" (pictured above).

Word quickly got out and Broni Walker was excited to visit the hall and see the graffiti referring to her parents, Joe and Colleen Walker. Broni says the

couple met in the hall playing badminton, a popular sport at the time. Coincidentally, the builders also found a battered shuttlecock under the floorboards.

It's assumed that the graffiti was added just before the Beauty Board wall coverings went up, probably in the late 1950s. The Walkers are also prominent farmers in Te Horo, and also supported the recent fundraising campaign.

Hall committee chair Andrew Annakin says the committee is considering ways to record and preserve the graffiti.

"They are colourful reminders of how this taonga is so deeply etched into the social and cultural fabric of Te Horo," he says.

Meanwhile, building works is well under way to earthquake strengthen and upgrade Te Horo Hall. Removal of the old wall linings has exposed the original native timber boards. These are mostly in good condition and will be returned to their former glory if the budget allows.