

# INTERVIEW WITH A LIFE MEMBER: ERNESTINE COLWELL



## Ernestine Colwell, Lifetime Member #45 of the Auckland Quilt Guild Interviewed by Susan Boucher – 27 May 2024

S: When did you join the Guild?

E: 1989

S: Where were the meetings held then?

E: We met at St Andrews Church, St Andrews Road, then Mt Eden, then moved to Freemans Bay Community Centre in about 1990.

S: Did you serve on the committee? If so, what positions did you hold?

E: I was Secretary during the time when Chris Berherseng and Wendy Easterbook were Presidents.

S: What was your most memorable time as a member?

E: I made the original banner for the Auckland Patchworkers and Quilters Guild and still have the design template in my lounge. It took 5-6 hours to stitch around the wording on the machine.

As the membership was growing I suggested we instigate a membership number system to keep track of the number of members.

A sub-committee was formed for the 10th anniversary of the guild in 1995 and the guild put up a prize of \$6,000 to design a quilt depicting Auckland and the area. I chaired the committee and it was judged. Barbara Billiard won it. The quilt was bought and ended up in North Wales as a birthday gift.

S: Tell me about Calico Christmas and how it started.

E: Pam Fitzgerald started it. She regarded herself as the matriarch of the Guild and had a place in the front row on meeting days and no one was allowed to sit in it.



It was started to raise money for the guild as there was not enough money to run the guild from membership fees alone. You had to be an Auckland based trader to come but it included Grandmothers Garden. Another group in New Zealand wanted to use the name so it was trade marked to stop them using it. This was done through a lawyer and the TM symbol was allowed on any Calico Christmas advertising material.

We had a weekend at Waipuna and we thought no one would come but 300 people for the lecture and about 100 for the dinner.



One year I helped with the baking for Calico Christmas. It was hilarious and we were covered in flour at one stage! One year we wore peaked caps and one year a patchwork vest.

S: When did you become a life member?

E: 2001, but I stopped coming to meetings because of my shift work as a midwife. I always seemed to be on duty on Saturday afternoons.

S: Are there any things you did differently?

E: There was always a committee member on the greetings table at the meetings. This was so they could get to know all the members and the members could get to know the committee members.

S: Do you still make quilts?

E: No, the last quilt I made was in 2001. I was piecing the border when the planes crashed in 9/11.

S: Did you quilt your own quilts.

E: I used to hand quilt but I can't now. I can still embroider though.

*Above: Ernestine,  
Left: One of her  
quilts*