



Farewell to Waiheke's queen

[GEORGE GARDNER](#) Last updated 05:00 23/01/2013

Mourners are getting ready to farewell a Waiheke Island matriarch.

Doreen Elizabeth Burns QSM died in her sleep at 2.30am on January 18 at Christ's Hospital in Selwyn Retirement Village, Pt Chevalier.

She was 93.

Doreen was born in Stratford, Taranaki, in 1919 and moved to Devonport as a child.

She worked in Epsom and Hamilton where she met Sel Houghton.

The couple married in 1942 and had a child, Wesley, but tragedy struck when Sel was killed on active service in 1944.

"By the time she was 25, she was a wife, a mother and a widow," daughter Rosemary says.

"And in those days there was no DPB."

Sel's good pal Bob Burns paid his friend's widow and son a visit and grew close to both of them.

He and Doreen married in 1946 and because Bob needed some peace after the war, the couple would visit Waiheke every Friday for the weekend.

"They moved here permanently in 1951," Rosemary says.

"Mum's family thought she was half-barmy coming to an island in the middle of nowhere. She was only going to stay for five years then go back to Devonport."

But the Burns family stayed.

The couple ran a hardware store in Oneroa and Doreen later managed a clothing business. The pair also published a free newspaper called The Good Oil, which started in 1971.

Doreen was a founding member of the Waiheke Care and Craft group, established in 1985, and didn't hand over the reins of co-ordinator until 2003.

She was a member and volunteer of countless groups, societies and good causes and will be remembered for helping get pensioner housing established on the island at Belgium St in Ostend in 1992.

Doreen was awarded a Queen's Service Medal for Community Service in 1995. And in 2004, she was one of six finalists Aucklanders of the Year award at which time she was dubbed the Queen of Waiheke for her 55 years of voluntary work on the island.

Doreen moved to Seaside Sanctuary in May 2009 for two-and-a-half years and spent her last 14 months at Selwyn Retirement Village in Pt Chevalier.

She is survived by her children Wesley, Pamela, Jim and Rosemary. The funeral for family and friends will take place on Thursday at 1.30pm at the Selwyn Village chapel, Target St, Pt Chevalier. No flowers by request.

The Waiheke Island memorial celebration will be on Friday at 11am at Morra Hall. Donations to the Auckland Rescue Helicopter Trust are welcome. Freepost 137292, PO Box 2252, Shortland St, Auckland 1140.

- Waiheke Marketplace