

# Waihi Beach: Historic cup all about fun

By [Elisabeth Easther](#)

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**A 100-year-old sporting event continues to thrive, writes Elisabeth Easther.**



Waihi Beach's New Year's Beach Sports Day celebrates 100 years on Tuesday, with the focus on fun and the Goldminers' original cup. Photo / Sally Gibbs

Waihi Beach is a favourite with families for so many reasons - 10km of spectacular white sand beach, the magnificent trees, the walks, the fishing, the history, not to mention the plethora of eating places. Waihi Beach has also secured its place in visitors' hearts with its annual Beach Sports Day, held every New Year's Day. Believed to be the longest running one-day beach sports event in New Zealand, this popular outing was first run by the goldminers in 1913, so this Tuesday celebrates its centenary. The miners decided there wasn't enough to do, so they organised a beach sports day with egg and spoon races, rowing and running.

In 1935, the Surf Club took over management of the event and, thanks to the hard work of a few stalwarts, it's been going strong ever since.

Local resident Mike Hickey remembers it was an exciting event when he was a child.

"I'm 68 and I've been coming here since I was 4. We used to take the train here from Frankton, in Hamilton, the Taniatua Express. Sometimes one of the farmers would give a big drum of milk, straight from the farm and the general store at the end of the beach would give the winners a penny icecream each."

Winners and spectators can still enjoy a free icecream - the committee has wisely organised extra freezer space to ensure the free frozen treats don't run out.

Another thing that hasn't changed is the cup; the original trophy is inscribed with the names of all the winners from years gone by. Colin Major, a retired Sanford's trawler captain, is proud of the cup's endurance.

"There aren't many trophies in New Zealand that are 100 years old, aside from the Ranfurly Shield. The winner has always been given a miniature of the trophy, which means the cup itself has never been given out to take home, which is why it's lasted so long. There's still space on it for a few more names, though."

Ian Robinson (78) has his name on the cup and according to Mike is still as fit as a fiddle, having been a New Zealand Surf Life Saving champion in his day. "I won the beach sprint in 1957, and in 1977 my son Bruce won it. These days I'm doing triathlons and, two days after the sports day, I'll do the fun run along Waihi Beach. We'll have about 800 people do the fun run, while we'll probably get several thousand come to the beach for the sports day."

Colin's involvement with the sports day goes way back. His parents, Pearl and Snow, used to bring their donkeys, Milly, Molly and Mandy down from the farm and give rides to children for thruppence a time. Colin won't be entering any of the races this year but will be helping with the organisation instead.

"I used to be a judge and grab the winners but now I've gone to the other side of the track and I'm the man who holds the tape."

These days visitors can still expect much of the old fun and some exciting new things too.

The festivities will begin with a skydiver landing outside the Surf Club, where there'll also be a coconut dig and a lolly scramble. Free icecreams and oranges are still on the programme, and the hungry can buy sizzled sausages for a gold coin donation. Holidaymakers can also sign up for the egg and spoon races and mothers, fathers and grandparents can enter the coconut races. Or how about a backwards, three-legged, mini-marathons? Or chariot races for teams of six?

All previous winners of the cup (or descendants of winners) are warmly welcomed.

A wonderful day for all ages and, as long as the weather behaves, Waihi Beach is sure to be brimming with good old-fashioned fun on New Year's Day.

**The details** [Waihi Beach](#): 155km from Auckland, 104km from Hamilton.

**Waihi Beach Centennial Beach Sports Programme:** January 1, Waihi Beach, The Esplanade, outside the surf club. 10.30am-3.30pm.

There's also a fun run on January 2 and a sand sculpture competition on January 3.

By [Elisabeth Easter Email](#)

