



Cristina, Richard and Helen Halliwell, pictured at the 50th anniversary

Halliwell's of Pukekohe embraces a new era

Halliwell Shoes Ltd in King Street Pukekohe is taking on a new look and a new name after 52 years of trading in King Street – Halliwell's of Pukekohe.

The store has been an icon in the town since Bert and Gwen Halliwell opened their family shoe store on lower King Street in 1958. Gwen had worked at Equity Shoes in Auckland in her single days, while Bert farmed at Helvetia after serving in the NZ Expeditionary Forces in Fiji during the war. Bert's sporting prowess was legendary in Franklin – he played rugby for Auckland, South Auckland and Old Boys club rugby, but sport injuries forced him to give up farming. The couple's change of career was to establish one of Franklin's longest running family businesses.

The move to the present premises came in 1962, after Gwen saw a 'For Sale' sign where Tommy Marshall's plumbing business was located and bought the land on the spot for 5,000 pounds. A new building was constructed and the business became a central point of the growing town. In December 1982, a fire lit by vandals in the storage shed behind threatened the store and neighbouring shops. As luck would have it, a major practice was being held at Bledisloe Park for the local rural fire brigades and their rapid, combined response averted certain disaster. The ensuing fire damage sale was to see some of the biggest crowds in Pukekohe turn up bargain hunting over three days.

Son Richard came into the shoe business after he married Helen, though he admits that he was "more interested in playing cricket" than the footwear business up until then. Richard trained for over three years with Campbell's Shoes, a well-established business in Auckland, to master his trade. Richard and Helen's children, Cristina, Stephen and Leanne could often be found helping out in the shop after school. A world trip convinced Gwen and Bert that times were changing for shoe retail and they opened Self Service Shoes in Pukekohe in 1969. It was the first of many expansions for the Halliwells, with Halliwell's Papakura opening in 1981.

Acquiring the brand 'Eyecatchers' saw the family set up stores in Royal Oak, Howick, Hamilton, and later Newmarket and Pakuranga, while Bert continued to front the Pukekohe store. Today, Eyecatcher branches have centralised in Meadowbank, Howick and Hamilton.

Gloria Mayor leads the team at Pukekohe having worked for the Halliwells for 32 years and Lorna Ngakura and Maureen Kelly – both a vital part of Halliwell's Shoes for a decade. A very experienced team, fully trained in fitting, a specialty at Halliwell's.

"We are not in the shoe business," explains Richard. "We are in the business of 'Feel Good,' of 'Happy Feet.' We want to put a smile on people's faces, make sure they have comfortable shoes with style. "Travelling to the Shoe Fairs of Europe keeps us up to date with fashion trends, new styles and materials. In today's market it's very important to be consistent with what we are presenting – middle up-market quality footwear that people will enjoy wearing," says Richard. ■

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