

ŌTAKI TODAY

Ngā kōrero o Ōtaki

MAEHE/MARCH 2026

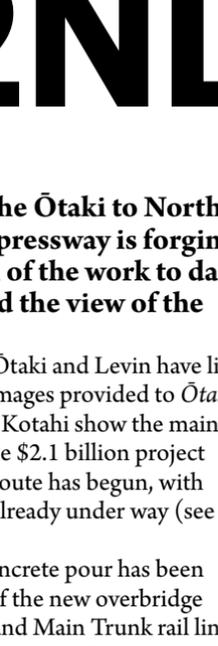
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New life for old building



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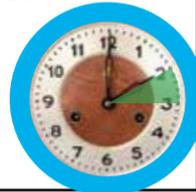
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Ō2NL FORGES AHEAD

By Ian Carson

Construction of the Ōtaki to North Levin (Ō2NL) expressway is forging ahead, with much of the work to date happening beyond the view of the public.

Travellers between Ōtaki and Levin have little to see so far, but new images provided to *Ōtaki Today* by NZTA Waka Kotahi show the main construction part of the \$2.1 billion project along the expressway route has begun, with extensive earthworks already under way (see photos at right).

The project's first concrete pour has been completed at the site of the new overbridge crossing the North Island Main Trunk rail line at the north end of the project. The pour formed the foundations for the abutment mechanically stabilised earth (MSE) wall, marking the first major step in construction of the structure.

The 25-metre-long, single-span overbridge will carry two lanes of State Highway 1 traffic, and a shared use path, over the rail corridor. The overbridge is due to be completed by October. It will provide better access for construction crews working on the Ō2NL expressway.

The first sod for the 24-kilometre section of State Highway 1 was turned in September last year.

Project director Glen Prince says the Ōtaki to Levin section of State Highway 1 has long been a safety concern, which the new expressway will address.

"When complete in 2029, the new expressway will see a reduction of deaths and serious injuries, compared to current numbers on the existing state highway and nearby local roads," Glen says. "During the five years to 2024, 70 people have died or been seriously injured along the route, making it one of the country's most unsafe sections of road to drive.

"We've seen huge benefits for travel times, efficiency and safety as a result of the Kāpiti



Expressway – Ōtaki to north of Levin: Te Pae o Tararua will be a vital continuation of this connection, supporting national and regional economic growth and also helping to facilitate development in the area. The Kāpiti Expressway is already such an important part of the region's infrastructure."

He says the Ōtaki-Levin expressway will support intercity connectedness and residential growth, and help cater to the rural economy.

"We'll also see reduced congestion and a more resilient road network."

He estimates a saving of 11-15 minutes for people's evening commutes between Ōtaki and north of Levin.

The photograph above of earthworks at South Manakau Road, looking north, show the extent of works not usually seen by the public.

At right, earthworks on the northern side of the Ōhau River.

Photos NZTA Waka Kotahi



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Plans matter as world wobbles

Global insecurity following the Israeli-American attack on Iran adds to the pressures on National and Labour to go into this year's election with a vision, strategic plan, and milestones on the way to achieving it.

As the two major parties contending for office after November 7, each, it can be argued, has a responsibility to unequivocally tell voters the direction and plans they have for getting the country through the current period of economic stress and the uncertainties of international alignments.

For Prime Minister Christopher Luxon it means that saying "we have a plan" and it is "all the previous government's fault" is no longer sufficient to secure the voting base his party needs to remain the dominant force in government.

For Leader of the Opposition Chris Hipkins it means there is little room for promises with a caveat that fulfilment is dependent on what his party might find in the financial books after taking office. Nor is there scope for alternative policies uncosted and short on detail.

It was the Labour Party of David Lange in the 1980s that threw out a previously well accepted custom that the two major parties each produced for an election a comprehensive manifesto setting out their intentions over a range of portfolios.

Lange didn't need a manifesto. The combination of his oratory and electorate tiredness of nine years of Robert Muldoon leading National gave Labour a huge headstart. By not producing a traditional manifesto it was able to enter office with a minimum of promises

to keep. It was enough to simply be different to "the other lot".

The way was clear for Lange's finance minister, Roger Douglas, to proceed with sweeping financial reforms that at significant human cost rescued the economy from an increasingly fragile situation and set the stage for decades-long growth.

For political parties, a manifesto can be a blessing or a curse. It offers promises that, if not kept, open a door for opposition. It can be a document that creates splits inside the party assembling it when contending groups within their ranks find agreement on content does not accord with their aims.

For example, during the 1960s MPs who now make up the caucuses of NZ First and Act and believe in the policies of each would have been members of the National caucus. Internal disputes between the factions were sorted behind closed doors and eventual commitments made to the manifesto placed before voters.

In similar fashion Labour would become bogged down with internal disputes embracing radical left viewpoints that are today welcomed into the ranks of Green MPs. Trade unions were probably more open then than today about the power they wielded inside the caucus.

More generalised versions of a manifesto subsequently surfaced for successive elections. If you could get away without too much detail, why put a potential noose around your neck? Jim Bolger used the terminology of manifesto, but compared with documents of the post-war period they were more low-key hyperbole than policy commitment.

This year, however, there seems a build-up of demand for far more than simply a political

response to the cost of living through answers to the rising price of electricity, burgeoning local body rates and supermarket pricing.

It is clear National Party members are looking to their political leadership for some form of vision for where they want the country to be a decade out, accompanied by detail of the plan to get there and key indicators of success or failure on the way to achieving it. It would be a positive for perceptions of the prime minister.

The reality for Labour is that it is on a firm footing if cost of living, rather than competing visions of administrative intent, is the focal point of the election. As the opposition party it can take a high ground in declaring how it will deal to the three big issues provoking the rising costs to households.

With a broader vision for the country become central in election debates, however, it will need to have a clear range of policies, costings, and a defined strategy. Restoring credibility after the Ardern years is crucial.

Labour and the Greens sold the country on introduction of the MMP system of government as one that would better allow a contest of ideas, along with fewer backroom deals and greater transparency. The claims made for all three of these attributes have since been discredited.

Publication of a pre-election manifesto by all political parties – but primarily National and Labour – ahead of Election '26 would go a long way to restore the system's credibility. It may also engender a sense of nation-wide purpose for progress out of the current malaise through a government elected on a vision and programme that a majority have signed up for through the voting process.

■ *Bruce has been an economics and business editor, and a foreign correspondent in Washington, London and Hong Kong.*

POLITICS



BRUCE KOHN

CARTOON OF THE MONTH

By Jared Carson



ŌTAKI TODAY *Ngā Kōrero o Ōtaki*

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ŌTAKI KITE FESTIVAL Saturday-Sunday, March 14-15, Ōtaki Beach. International and New Zealand flyers, including the return of the Phoenix Collective, the stunt kite flyers from Queensland. On-stage entertainment, food trucks, craft stalls, Kelly & Co big dig – and lots of kites.

KĀPITI CLASSIC 11am-7pm Saturday, March 14, at Southward Car Museum, Otaihanga Rd, Paraparaumu. Classic acts including Th' Dudes, Anika Moe, The Warratahs, Automatic 80s and local support act Ciorstiadh. Tickets at eventfinda.co.nz

MENZSHED KĀPITI Annual fundraiser garage sale 9am-12.30pm Saturday, March 14, 22B Rangihiroa St, Waikanae Beach. Hand tools, power tools old and new(ish), plants and garden gear, household goods, fishing gear, indoor and outdoor furniture, building equipment and more.

MĀORILAND FILM FESTIVAL March 24-28, celebrating storytelling with screenings, art, and talks for its 13th annual event. Now the world's biggest Indigenous film festival – right here in Ōtaki. See maorilandfilm.co.nz

WEA TALKS Material Culture in the Pacific Waikanae Presbyterian Church Hall, 43 Ngaio Rd. **Dr Sean Mallon**, Saturday March 21 10am-1pm. Sean is senior curator Pacific cultures at Te Papa Tongarewa and an award-winning author whose work focuses on Pacific history, art, and material culture. He will share insights into Te Papa's collaborative Pacific co-collecting projects and explore the material culture of Indigenous militaries across the Pacific. **AI in our Daily Lives**, with **Andrew Lensen**, 10am-1pm Saturday, March 28. Andrew is senior lecturer and programme director of artificial intelligence at Te Herenga Waka VUW. He will discuss how new AI tools are shaping our lives, focusing on issues such as transparency, trust, and ethics.

MULLED WINE CONCERT NZ Symphony Orchestra principal cellist Andrew Joyce and principal viola Julia Joyce join cellist Ken Ichinose and violinists Jessica Oddie and Simeon Broom to play *Boccherini Quintet Op 25 No 1*, *Kiwi Salina Fisher's Heal* and *Schubert's Cello Quintet – D956 Op Post 163* at Paekākāriki's Memorial Hall, 2.30pm March 22. Tickets \$35, students \$15. Email marygow@gmail.com for tickets.

CONCERT AT THE ROTUNDA The restored rotunda at the old Children's Health Camp has its first concert at 7pm on Saturday, April 11, starring Andrew and Kirsten London with Neil Billington. Tickets limited to 150 – general public \$40, Friends of the Ōtaki Rotunda members \$35. For tickets go to [events.humanitix.com/rotunda-concert-april-2026](http://humanitix.com/rotunda-concert-april-2026)

BIG FISH COMPETITION Hosted by Ōtaki Boating Club, April 18-19 (Saturday 6.30am-2pm, Sunday 6.30am-1pm), Ōtaki Beach (details page 15).

COMMUNITY NETWORKING: An opportunity for any agency providing a service to the people of Ōtaki to find out what each other is doing. First Tuesday of every month, 9.30am for an hour at the Gertrude Atmore Supper Room (by the library).

PARKINSON'S KĀPITI/HOROWHENUA Relish Café, Elizabeth St, Waikanae: Social Group, 10am third Tuesday of month. Women with Parkinson's Group, 10am first Tuesday of month. Contact: Kāpiti, Kevin 027 4507 420 Horowhenua, Raewyn 021 226 4645

KĀPITI HOROWHENUA HOMEOPATHY FOR CHILDREN Offering a holistic option in natural healthcare for families. Available for children under 12 years. Saturday clinics in Paraparaumu. Koha appreciated. Contact: kapitihomeopathyforchildren@gmail.com

ŌTAKI MUSEUM 49 Main St. 06 364-6886. *Mai i te Kāinga Tāone Iki – Wāhanga 1: 1843-1920 (From Kāinga to Village – Part 1: 1843-1920)*. Museum open 10am-2pm Thursday to Saturday, except public holidays.

ŌTAKI BUZZ CLUB for beekeeping enthusiasts. Meets every 3rd Wednesday 7pm at Waitohu School hall, Te Manuao Road.

ŌTAKI MARKET 58 Main Highway, Ōtaki. Open Sundays 10am-2pm.

FAMILY HISTORY Join Ōtaki Family History Inc for monthly group meetings, 7.30pm 4th Tuesday of the month (Feb to Nov), at the Gertrude Atmore Supper Room, Ōtaki.

POETRY IN ŌTAKI Third Friday of each month, 10.30-11.30am, Gertrude Atmore Supper Room. Call 021 050 1904 for details.

CHOIRS Let's Sing Ōtaki, Tuesdays 2-3pm, Hadfield Hall. Kāpiti Women's Choir, Mondays 1.30-3pm, Baptist Church, Te Moana Rd, Waikanae. New members welcome. Enquiries to Ann-Marie Stapp 021 492 127.

ŌTAKI GARAGE SALE: Third Saturday of the month, 9am-11.30am, Presbyterian Church, 249 Mill Rd. 06 364-6449. Rev Peter Jackson 021 207 9455, owpresb@extra.co.nz

ŌTAKI LIBRARY – ALL SESSIONS FREE:

JP service every Monday 10.30am-12.30pm;

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To list an event, contact debbi@idmedia.co.nz

New life for old Main St building

By Ian Carson

A long-vacant butcher's shop in Ōtaki is being given a new lease of life as a specialist paper-making studio and retail space.

Rob and Katharina Kennedy are due to open Paperscape at 78 Main Street (next to Ōtaki Pharmacy), in June. Their new premises are the first new build in Main Street for decades.

The original building, dating back to the 1920s, was unsalvageable, forcing a full rebuild after structural engineers found significant issues. If the Kennedys weren't going to build, they would have had to do extensive earthquake strengthening.

"In the end it was a cleaner path to start again," Katharina says.

The Kennedys bring with them years of experience turning native and non-woody plants into handcrafted paper for artists, craftspeople and the public.

They were looking at warehouses and other options around Kāpiti, but nothing sparked much imagination. Then they saw the old butcher shop in Ōtaki was for sale, and despite the building's condition, saw potential.

"We liked the fact that it had a retail space, it was in the community, there was foot traffic," Rob says. "It felt more embedded. At the heart of our operation is the idea of lifting the value of nature by supporting economic activity around conservation goals."

The Kennedys have lived on the Kāpiti Coast for years, previously operating from Paraparaumu. Rob has been making paper for about 10 years, with Katharina joining the business four years ago.

Paperscape works primarily with non-woody



Rob and Katharina Kennedy outside the new Main Street building that will house their Paperscape business. It's due to open in June.
Photo Ōtaki Today

plants – harakeke (flax), cabbage tree, grasses, bamboo and fibrous exotics – rather than timber pulp.

"To extract fibre from trees requires a lot more energy, high pressure systems and chemicals that is often smelly and sulphur-based," Rob says. "We don't do that type of pulping."

Instead, plant material is harvested or received, pulped and processed by hand into sheets. Paperscape produces paper up to A2 size, selling sheets, packs, envelopes, wedding stationery and wrapping paper.

"It's a very tactile paper. It doesn't have that industrial blandness a lot of other paper has. Every piece has its own character."

Katharina says the handmade process leaves distinctive natural edges that customers value.

"It's not clean and machine-cut. Lots of people like that."

Their client base is broad. Paperscape supplies to printers, painters, photographers and bookbinders, along with more unusual users.

"We've had lampshade makers, a furniture maker using it as backing, film props," Katharina says. "So really quite a broad range."

A key point of difference, Rob says, is provenance.

"If you were a wine drinker, you'd talk about the terroir. It's not just the flavour, it's the history of its production. Photographers taking landscape photos often want to print on something that is of that place."

The business also intersects with conservation and te ao Māori values around resource use.

"If you're going to use something, use it well. Don't just waste it," Rob says. "We work with weavers who might not use every part of a plant. That can be passed on and a more complete use can be made."

The couple are careful not to become an informal green-waste drop-off point. Instead, they hope to build relationships with landowners interested in native planting and sustainable management.

They are keen work with people who have aspirations for revegetation, for example.

They hope to open the retail space around June, initially a few days a week, alongside workshops.

"We'll offer a classic introduction – a morning making paper," Rob says. "But we'd also like to go deeper with weekend or six-week courses."

The aim was to create a welcoming, creative hub where people can see what they do, have a play, make a piece of paper and take a souvenir home.

For the Kennedys, Ōtaki offers the right mix of biodiversity, creativity and community.

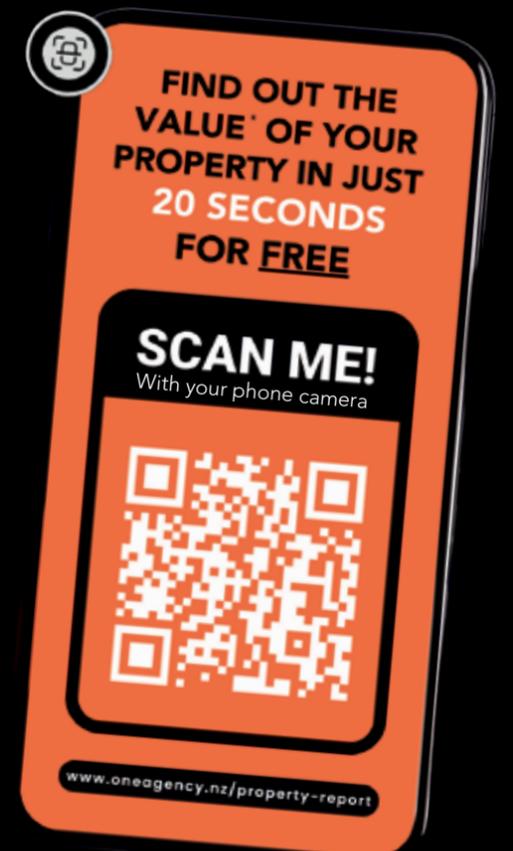
"It's about proving you can have businesses aligned with conservation goals," Rob said. "When you start to look at that, you realise they're good values anyway."

■ Paperscape, 78 Main St, Ōtaki. See paperscape.co.nz

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EGYPT & SAUDI ARABIA DISCOVERY

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Khalid thoughtful, engaging

By Ian Carson

British actor, director and activist Khalid Abdalla brought a thoughtful and deeply personal perspective to the Māoriland Hub on Saturday during a Native Minds session with filmmaker and broadcaster Tainui Stephens.

Speaking before an engaged audience as part of the Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts, Khalid reflected on identity, belonging and the experiences that shape his worldview.

With an international acting career that includes roles in the television drama *The Crown*, the thriller series *The Day of the Jackal* and the film *The Kite Runner*, Khalid might have been expected to deliver a fiery address about the political struggles affecting his Egyptian family and the Palestinian genocide.

Instead, the conversation unfolded in a measured and reflective tone, with Khalid responding carefully to questions from Tainui and the audience about what was on his “native mind”.

Introducing himself in full, he shared for the first time his real name.

“My name in English is Khalid Abdalla, but my name – and this is the first day in my life I have been invited to say it – is Khalid Hossam Ibrahim Abdalla.”

He spoke about the complexity of his background and sense of identity.

“My nation is a complicated question,” he said. “Both my parents are Egyptian, but I was born in Glasgow. I was brought up bilingual in London.”

He lived primarily in Egypt between 2008 and 2016, a time he described as offering a



Khalid Abdalla, left, speaks with Tainui Stephens during the Native Minds session. Photo Ōtaki Today

period of relative safety and connection to his cultural roots.

“I consider myself an Arab,” he said, reflecting on the way identity could span places, languages and experiences.

He discussed his theatre work, particularly his stage production *Nowhere*, which explored ideas of belonging and displacement. The work became something he carried with him as he travelled and performed around the world.

He likened the play to a vessel that allowed him to create space for conversation and connection.

“Essentially it’s like my waka,” he said, using a metaphor that resonated strongly with the audience.

“It is the vessel that I travel with and that is able in some theatres, in some spaces, in some gatherings, to create enough space for me to

speaking or feel seen, but also to be with others in a wider family.”

Khalid said his experience at the festival had given him a powerful sense of connection with the creative community in Aotearoa.

During the pōwhiri welcoming guests to the event, he said he felt an unexpected sense of belonging.

“I suddenly felt that I am among my iwi, creatively and culturally,” he said.

The actor also acknowledged the emotional weight he carried as part of the wider Arab world at a time of ongoing violence in Palestine, describing it as something that travels with him wherever he goes. Despite the gravity of those realities, Khalid’s message to the audience remained grounded in empathy, shared humanity and the power of storytelling.

BRIEFS

New speed limits

From Friday (March 13), new speed limits will apply between Te Horo and Ōtaki on old State Highway 1, supporting its new status as a local road. Changes include: Taylors Road to north of Waitohu Valley Road – 100km/h down to 60km/h; Waerenga Road to Riverbank Road – 70km/h down to 50km/h; south end of Ōtaki River bridge to intersection with Ōtaki Gorge Road/old SH1 – 100km/h down to 50km/h; old SH1 through Te Horo township and Te Horo Beach Road intersection – 80km/h down to 60km/h.

Major Events Fund open

Kāpiti Coast District Council’s Major Events Fund – designed to attract high-impact visitor events – has opened for applications. Events are expected to deliver measurable economic benefit and align strongly with the district’s distinctive identity and strategic priorities. Applications close on March 30. See kapiticoast.govt.nz for eligibility criteria, guidelines, and application details.

One a day for brigade

Ōtaki Volunteer Fire Brigade responded to on average one call a day during February. The 28 call-outs included seven for private fire alarms, and six for rubbish, grass or scrub fires. There were three each for motor vehicle crashes, storm-related wind damage, and “good intent”. The brigade attended two property fires, two medical emergencies, and there were two calls to assist the Levin Brigade.

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Milestones, challenges for Raukawa

Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga has marked a year of significant legal milestones and steady financial growth, according to the 2026 Raukawa ki te Tonga Trust annual report.

Trust chair Rachael Selby said that at the forefront in 2025 had been the long-running Marine and Coastal Area (Maca) claim. Heard in the High Court in 2024, the case culminated in a June 2025 decision granting Ngāti Raukawa customary marine title (CMT) under the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 across the full coastal area claimed – from Kuketauaki, south of Te Horo, to the Rangitikei River.

The application was made by the trust, and the judgment confirmed that Ngāti Raukawa iwi, hapū and whānau had maintained customary use and occupation of the area in accordance with tikanga since 1840. The ruling provides legal tools to help protect marine and coastal spaces and affirms the iwi's right to participate in decision-making affecting those areas.

Rachael said in her report the decision was clear and well reasoned, grounded in extensive evidence presented by kaumātua, scholars, fishers, historians, environmental scientists and other experts. However, the ruling has been appealed.

In September and October 2025, the trust returned to the High Court for hearings on wāhi tapu and protected customary rights. In October, the coalition government repealed the act under which the case had been heard. Despite that change, Rachael said the 2025 judgment remained significant for the depth of research and expert oversight involved.

The trust has agreed that a rehearing under the amended legislation is desirable, but says it



“The 2025 judgement [on customary marine title] confirmed that our iwi, hapū and whānau have maintained customary use and occupation in accordance with tikanga of the Application Area since 1840. The decision would give us legal tools to protect our marine and coastal spaces, and afforded us rights to be part of decisions.”

– Raukawa ki te Tonga Trust chair
Rachael Selby

should be confined to matters directly affected by the changes. The case remains important for the future of Ngāti Raukawa mokopuna.

Other matters remain unresolved. Progress on the in-shore fisheries dispute has stalled. The trust also continues to review its deed to align with changes introduced by the Māori Fisheries Amendment Act 2024. Maintaining and growing the iwi membership register is another priority as Waitangi Tribunal hearings near completion in 2026 and attention turns toward settlement discussions with the Crown.

Meanwhile, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga AHC (Asset Holding Company) has reported solid financial performance despite a challenging domestic economy.

Chair Guy Royal reported that 2025 was “a story of two different worlds”. While New Zealand businesses faced high interest rates, a lingering cost-of-living crisis and the highest company liquidations since 2010, offshore markets rebounded strongly. Interest rate cuts in

major economies and rapid growth in artificial intelligence drove significant gains in global technology stocks.

Because the AHC portfolio is globally diversified, it was able to capture those offshore gains. Net assets grew to \$34.1 million, up about 5 percent on the previous year. The diversified listed portfolio delivered a 15.7 percent return, well ahead of long-term targets, while higher cash and fixed-income reserves returned 4.8 percent and provided liquidity for future opportunities. The listed equities portfolio's carbon footprint is now estimated to be 36 percent lower than the market benchmark.

Challenges remain, particularly in fisheries. Interests in Moana New Zealand and quota holdings make up about 55 percent of the total portfolio. Moana generated a 2 percent return this year amid export volatility, rising fuel and labour costs, and regulatory pressures. While settlement quota performed better, purchased quota valuations declined.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights for Raukawa ki te Tonga Trust in 2025:

- fish distributions totalling \$17,331 provided to support hui at marae
- 58 events supported
- \$30,000 in distributions approved for marae projects
- \$50,000 to support charitable fisheries projects approved
- trust deed amendments as per the Māori Fisheries Amendment Act progressing
- six hapū reached more than 1000 members
- evidence presented in the High Court for the Takutai Moana Marine & Coastal Area claim, closing submissions presented in November 2024, waahi tapu hearing in September 2025
- the trust opted for its tuna ACE to remain with Te Ohu Kaimoana for the 2024/2025 fishing year – consequently, the trust's portion of tuna cannot be caught.

The following matters were reported as required by the Maori Fisheries Act:

- no disposal of income shares.
- no disposal of settlement quota
- no quota shares purchased.

Guy said reducing reliance on a single sector was a key strategic focus, while maintaining kaitiakitanga responsibilities.

Since 2019, AHC net assets have grown from \$25 million to more than \$34 million. This year, a dividend of \$230,009 will be paid to the trust – well above the \$150,000 minimum target.

Looking ahead to 2026, the AHC remained cautious but prepared, holding higher cash reserves while waiting for the right direct investment opportunities.

■ See bit.ly/4rNDV8C for the full report

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Open day on the River

The Friends of the Ōtaki River is inviting the community to celebrate 25 years of partnership work with Greater Wellington Regional Council at an open day on Saturday, March 21.

Friends chair Max Lutz says the event, running from 10am to 2pm, marks a quarter century of collaboration restoring and enhancing the Ōtaki River environment.

“We formed 25 years ago and celebrated that last year,” Max says. “This open day is really about celebrating 25 years of working in partnership with Greater Wellington. It’s about showing people what’s been achieved.”

The day will centre on the idyllic Chrystalls Bend (above), with several ways for people to take part. Families can meet at the Friends’ nursery on Riverbank Road near the road bridge, and walk upriver to Chrystalls Bend, or start from

the estuary where volunteers will be stationed along the route to talk about restoration work. There’s also access through the Ōtaki racecourse.

“People can park within the racecourse grounds and walk through to the Ōtaki Lakes, then on to Chrystalls Bend and back,” Max says. “It gives people a rare chance to see the lakes.”

The lakes, developed through gravel extraction by Winstone and owned by Greater Wellington, are gradually being turned over to community use. Max says many locals had never seen the lakes because access is limited during normal operations at Winstones.

The lakes are already open for model

yachting, canoe polo and waka ama, and in-the-know walkers enjoy the area. At Chrystalls Bend there are picnic tables and park benches, toilets nearby and even a defibrillator.

People with disabilities will be able to drive as far as Chrystalls Bend, and anyone who finds the walk too much can get a ride back courtesy of the regional council.

“There’ll be handouts, but more importantly there will be people along the way you can stop and talk to,” Max says. “It’s an opportunity for those who haven’t been there before to see 25 years of work – planting, tracks, protection and partnership in action.”

Walkers turn out for hall fundraiser

Te Horo Hall fundraisers had the first of a series of farm walks on Sunday (March 8).

Six more walks will be held on consecutive Sundays through March and April.

On Sunday (March 15), the walk will be through Kerry Walker’s farm at 120 Te Horo Beach Road. It starts with a gentle climb up sand dunes to a viewpoint out to Kapiti Island. It continues through the undulating farm to Harakeke Road then back via the Wilson farm and Swamp Road.

Each covers between 5-10km and showcases a different landscape – from rolling farmland and native bush to sand dunes, wetlands, riversides and hill country with expansive coastal views. The walks offer access to areas not usually open to the public.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, March 29, Rod and Joy Clifton will open their private tractor collection and memorabilia to the public in aid of the hall restoration. The collection features a range of vintage tractors and farming equipment, offering a rare glimpse into rural history and machinery that helped shape the district.

Fundraising helped to earthquake strengthen the historic Te Horo Hall – now the focus is on recladding and strengthening the exterior.

■ For more information, including online bookings, go to tehorohall.org.nz

Contact me at my Kāpiti office

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SOME OF THE MANY TRAVEL PARTNERS I WORK WITH:



Wartime women at sea acknowledged

The wreath-laying ceremony at Ōtaki College on March 9 acknowledged women at sea during times of war.

It was a theme picked up by college students Mau-Atua Edwards and Giorgio Bevan, who shared powerful historical accounts highlighting stories often overlooked in war narratives.

Mau-Atua reflected on the tragedy of the troop transport ship *Marquette* during the First World War. Originally a cargo ship in peacetime, the *Marquette* had been converted into a troop ship when it was struck by a German torpedo on October 23, 1915, as it entered the Gulf of Salonika. It sank within 10 minutes.

By the time rescue boats arrived, 167 people had drowned, including 32 New Zealanders. Among the dead were 10 New Zealand nurses, making the tragedy one of the country's most significant losses of medical personnel in the war.

Many of those who survived endured hours in the cold sea before help arrived. They included nurse Mary Greger, whose arm was crushed between the ship and a lifeboat during the chaos.

Despite her injuries, Mary stayed afloat for hours. She described swimming while sick and exhausted, eventually clinging to wreckage.

"Men died on all sides," she said, describing

the trauma and confusion as survivors struggled in the water. Twenty-six New Zealand nurses survived the disaster. Their bravery was later praised by a medical officer from the *Marquette*, who wrote to the matron-in-chief: "They mustered quickly and quietly at their alarm post, cheerfully and without the least confusion or panic. No words can express our admiration."

Giorgio talked about the story of pioneering marine engineer Victoria Drummond, who forged a career at sea despite strong prejudice against women in the maritime industry.

Born into an aristocratic family in 1894, Victoria pursued engineering work during the war and later served on merchant vessels.

During an enemy air attack on a cargo ship she was serving on, Victoria kept the engines running alone after ordering the rest of the crew on deck. Her actions enabled the ship to escape. She was awarded the MBE and the Lloyd's War Medal for bravery at sea.

The stories highlighted the often unrecognised contributions of women whose courage helped shape wartime history.



Arctic Convoy Club president Derek Whitwam, left, and fellow member Stan Welch, in front of the club's flag, flying for the first time at Ōtaki College's SS Otaki commemorations. Both men are 100 years old. Photo Ōtaki Today

LOCAL BUSINESS



Alan Thomas, who started The Wheel Magician franchise business. Photo supplied

Simple idea goes nationwide

A business that began with a simple idea in Wellington traffic has grown into a nationwide franchise network – and its founders have recently made Ōtaki their home.

Alan and Lisa Thomas established The Wheel Magician franchise about 15 years ago. Today the business has 13 franchises operating in both the North and South Island, but the couple remain closely involved in the day-to-day work.

Alan remains "on the tools" in the local operation covering Upper Hutt through to Levin, repairing damaged alloy wheels directly at customers' homes or workplaces. He also finds time to train new franchisees and ensure quality standards are maintained. Lisa handles the administration, marketing and franchise support side of the business.

"We fix kerb-damaged alloy wheels and we do it as a fully mobile service," Alan says. "We'll drive to the customer's residence or place of work and repair the wheel on site so the car doesn't have to go anywhere."

Working from a specially equipped van that doubles as a mobile workshop, Alan removes the wheel from the vehicle, carries out the repair, and refits it – usually within an hour per wheel.

"We fix painted wheels, different colours, and diamond-cut wheels. Most of the work is

cosmetic damage from scraping the kerb, but we can also change colours or remove embedded brake dust that has etched into the paint."

Structural damage such as cracks or buckles is not repaired because of safety concerns, but the cosmetic repairs can dramatically improve a vehicle's appearance.

"The car might look great, but if the wheels are scratched up it really lets it down, especially if you're looking to sell it," Alan says.

The business concept came about after the couple emigrated from the United Kingdom and initially ran a vehicle touch-up and paint repair service. A car dealer once asked Alan if he could do anything about damaged wheels – a question that sparked the idea.

"At that time nobody was really offering a dedicated service for alloy wheels," he says. "Panel shops would do it reluctantly and charge a lot, or people just replaced the wheels. I realised there was a gap in the market."

After refining the repair process and building demand among car dealers, the Thomases developed the concept into a franchise.

Despite the company's growth, Alan still enjoys the hands-on work.

"I've always been a practical person," he says. "It's satisfying seeing a damaged wheel made to look like new again."

• See wheelmagician.co.nz



Mill Road waits for summer

A full resal of Mill Road won't be happening until next summer.

Locals have become frustrated with the road surface's dips and bumps created after pipes were laid along the road. The wastewater project is still on track for completion at the end of April, with crews doing final connections, testing and finishing works.

Sean Mallon, Kāpiti Coast District Council's group manager infrastructure and asset management, says staff have assessed what rehabilitation works can be done to improve the road's condition.

"We have a significant list of rehabilitation works that will be carried out over the next six weeks to improve the surface of Mill Road," Sean told Ōtaki Today. "However, the full extent of the major re-seal works will need to be done during next summer's re-seal programme."

Much of the current activity around the Mill Road/Rāhui Road roundabout remains focused on completing final stages and to minimise disruption to the community – and to visitors attending the Ōtaki Kite Festival at the weekend.

"We acknowledge the disruption has generated understandable frustration, and we note the recent feedback received. We appreciate the community's continued patience."

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HUATAU/Opinion

HE TIROHANGA HOU: HENITI BUICK

Autumn buzz begins in the town that thrives when we show up

Early in the month, Mayor Janet Holborow, Cr Jocelyn Prvanov and I took on a team triathlon at the Kāpiti Women's Triathlon – for my first triathlon it was a challenge, but also a whole lot of fun.

What lifted the day wasn't the finish line, it was seeing so many locals, especially Ōtaki women, step up to give it a go. Community supporting community – that's wellness right there in action.

It also raises an important conversation about health access in our town. Over the years Ōtaki has sat in the middle of boundaries that don't always make practical sense. Health districts, agency lines and service catchments are often drawn without reflecting how our community

actually lives and moves.

That means our people don't always get to the service or destination they need or prefer. It can affect continuity of care, funding decisions and how easily whānau navigate support.

It's a conversation I'd like us to explore more deeply at council and with our community – how we better advocate for services that recognise Ōtaki as a connected community with its own identity and needs, not simply a line on a map between two larger centres.

In February, I also enjoyed the Waitangi Day celebration hosted by Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki. From wood chopping to chocolate strawberries to kaumātua ukelele and live local talent, it was a



relaxed, inclusive day where whānau and friends connected across generations. Those moments of togetherness matter and need to happen more often.

And speaking of teams, huge congratulations to the Horowhenua-Kāpiti touch teams who brought home two bronze medals in the U16 and open mixed grades at nationals. Well done to all involved. With muster season for league, rugby, football and netball upon us, there's a real buzz as families return to sidelines and fields across the district.

Ōtaki has a host of fantastic community events coming up, too. From March 13-15, Te

Wānanga o Raukawa's annual pre-season netball tournament brings some of the country's top teams to town for a weekend of high-energy competition. March 24-25 sees the return of the Māoriland Film Festival, five days celebrating Indigenous storytelling from around the globe right here in our Ōtaki backyard. And on March 14-15, the skies above Ōtaki Beach will fill with colour at the Ōtaki Kite Festival, one of the Kāpiti Coast's most loved family events.

Ōtaki thrives when we show up – for our health, our events, our teams and each other. There is plenty happening in our town, and plenty more to be proud of.

■ *Heniti is the Ōtaki Ward councillor*

CAM'S CORNER: CAM BUTLER

A blessing of local festivals

We have certainly been blessed with festivals at the moment with the Te Horo Garden trail making a return, the Festival of Pots and Garden Art, The Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts (two shows at the Māoriland Hub) plus a fantastic Waitangi Day celebration at Taumānuka organised by Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki.



And how excited are we for the Ōtaki Kite Festival and Māoriland Film Festival that are coming up! And then it isn't too long to Mātāriki.

Do try to get out and support these festivals as they are part of the culture of the area and community support helps justify funding from sources such as KCDC.

Roadworks, sigh

February gave the news that Mill Road would not be resurfaced until at least October due to required works to finish the wastewater pipe connections, meaning the road would miss the March 31 deadline for resealing. This went down with the community like a cup of the proverbial as you could imagine.

I have appealed to the mayor, KCDC chief executive and head of infrastructure to try and remedy this situation. While there has been some movement on this, at the time of typing this column there was no definite news.

The Old SH1 revocation is moving ahead at a reasonable pace with a large portion of the kerbing and footpaths soon to be finished. Plus two pedestrian crossings are now active

outside New World and The Big Egg. As this is quite a change please keep your eyes open for pedestrians crossing when driving through.

Waerenga Road crossings

While on the topic of pedestrian crossings, the two school/college related crossings on Waerenga Road are now to be rebuilt as raised crossings. This increases the safety of our tamariki and other users and has been

necessary due to continued speeding by a sector of the community down Waerenga Road. I have personally seen a car overtaking through one of the crossings, which was unbelievable dangerous.

Coast35 Run

On Sunday, March 15, starting in QE Park, Paekākāriki, the Coast35 is a run supporting mental health that finishes at Riverstone Cafe in Ōtaki (Jeanine – I hope you have lots of staff on that day!). This run will go along the shared path that now runs right from QE Park through to north of Ōtaki and could be done in five hours of walking if running is not your thing. Or if even that is really not your thing, then you can also donate to the mental health cause. Search for "Move for Mental Health" to find the donation page.

You can also join in the run/walk anywhere along the path – the goal is to get people moving at the end of the day.

- Like our Ōtaki Community Board Facebook page.
- Next Ōtaki Community Board meeting is 7pm on Tuesday, March 31.

■ *Cam is chair of the Ōtaki Community Board*

TE HORO OUTLOOK: MICHAEL MOORE

Help make Te Horo predator free

Protecting the environment isn't just the work of agencies and experts – it begins at home, in our own backyards, and with the choices we make as a community.

One of the most effective and rewarding ways to make a real difference here on the Kāpiti Coast is by getting involved in Predator Free Te Horo.

This community-led initiative is part of a growing movement throughout Aotearoa, empowering local residents to restore native birdlife by reducing predator numbers in a safe, coordinated, and accessible way.

What makes Predator Free Te Horo so special is its grassroots spirit. Volunteers work together to set, check, and maintain traps across neighbourhoods, lifestyle blocks, bush margins, and urban streets. Every trap placed and every predator removed directly boosts the survival chances of native birds like kererū, tūi, ruru, and piwakawaka.

These taonga species are increasingly returning to areas where community trapping groups are active – living proof of what we can achieve when we act collectively.

Getting involved is easy. Predator Free Te Horo provides guidance, resources, and support for anyone wanting to set up a trap on their property. Volunteers help match residents with the right type of trap and offer practical advice on placement and maintenance. Whether you're a seasoned conservationist or someone who simply loves hearing birdsong over your morning coffee, there's a role for everyone.

Even one trap on one property makes a

measurable difference. The benefits extend well beyond wildlife protection.

Community-driven conservation strengthens local connections.

If you're new to the area, you will find an easy way to connect and feel part of something bigger. Children will learn about ecology and see their actions making a tangible impact.

It's a powerful reminder that environmental restoration isn't abstract – it's personal, local,

and achievable.

There are also broader environmental outcomes. Reduced predator numbers nurture healthier ecosystems, which in turn enhance our walking tracks, streams, and reserves. The return of native birds improves seed dispersal and contributes to forest regeneration. These improvements enrich the natural character of Waikanae and Te Horo and support the wellbeing of the entire Kāpiti Coast.

If you'd like to take part, Predator Free Te Horo welcomes new volunteers – simply hosting a trap on your property really helps. Drop an email to PFTeHoro@gmail.com

Together, we can ensure our environment thrives. If you're ready to join the effort or want more information, I encourage you to reach out, connect, and become part of this positive, practical movement.

Let's keep building a community where native wildlife is abundant, the environment is cared for, and everyone feels empowered to play their part.

■ *Michael is a member of Waikanae Community Board and a Te Horo Beach resident*

THE ELECTORATE: TIM COSTLEY

Helping to unlock the potential of Ōtaki's community

Sometimes people ask me why I gave up flying helicopters to be your local MP.

It has been an absolute privilege to serve as your MP, and I'm asking you to give me three more years at the election this year. I'm motivated by people, by community, by our country, and by service.

They are what matter to me the most. I've always said that I know I can't change the world, but I can make a world of difference to the people I meet each day in Ōtaki.

I think of the woman who came to my office with nowhere to live, and had keys to a house that afternoon. I think of the gentleman who

had been waiting years for an operation and I got him the appointment. I think of the young mum who needed a bit more support at home, or the boy who couldn't get transport to school on time.

You won't know who they are walking down the street, but I know the difference that my advocacy and support made to their lives. I believe that all adds up and slowly changes Ōtaki for the better.

I believe our country is at its best when our community is at its best. It's an honour



for me to visit so many groups and organisations in Ōtaki that do amazing things in our community. I don't believe that government holds the answers to every problem.

We hold so much potential in Ōtaki, we just need to unlock it and that's where government can often step

in, like recent support for not-for-profits in our region. I've supported initiatives from the new mini golf to charities like coastguard and hospice, and I regularly put my own time, energy, money and sweat into helping local causes.

We have the best community here and we should celebrate it more.

My 23 years of military service at home and in

conflict zones around the world leave me with a deep passion for New Zealand. There is no other place I want to raise a family, or to live. We may face challenges but I've seen enough other places on earth to know that where we live is the best little country on earth. I'll continue to dedicate my life to serving this place we call home.

And service really does drive me. It could be the Air Force, it could be the charity I founded, it could be the school board, or it could be as MP. My life revolves around service and always will.

It is our country, our community, and our people that matter most to me, and that's why I want to keep serving as Ōtaki's local MP.

■ *Tim is the Ōtaki electorate MP*

Long-term gain from short-term pain?

IS IT JUST ME or does anyone else notice this? The very people who deny all of humanity a pathway out of the seeming mess the world is in, are the same people repeatedly providing ample reason to take a better, alternative course.

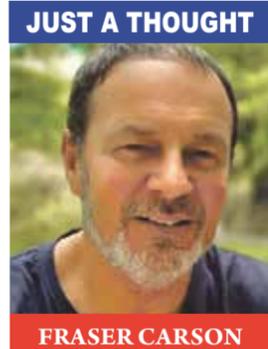
Take for example the headlines that are increasingly dominated by soaring oil and gas prices and market volatility.

It's been obvious for some time that a global economy that's dependent on a centrally controlled resource, that is extracted from the earth and burnt for release into the atmosphere, is a road to hell. Not only is it not renewable, it stuffs our environment and binds us to corporate global forces we have absolutely no control over.

So, when the biggest supporter of this mindless adventure in futility decides to start a war in the Middle East, he reminds us that his actions (missiles in this case) do more than just cut off power or disrupt shipping, they kick away the very foundations of the little global stability we have.

In other words, if we didn't already know it, Trump's war will eventually backfire and help accelerate our transition to self-sustaining renewable energy.

That's just simple logic given that oil, gas, coal and Trump can't live forever.



JUST A THOUGHT

FRASER CARSON

Not only is it not renewable, it stuffs our environment and binds us to corporate global forces we have absolutely no control over.



Image by Pixabay.com

The problem is the damage being done in the meantime – and yes, we are running out of time. Assuming most scientists have a better handle on the massive threat of human activity on the environment than do a few powerful politicians, I ask myself a few simple questions:

1. Why is war not good for the environment and human habitation?
2. Why continuing to extract oil, gas and coal is not a good idea.
3. Why is concentrating decision making in the hands of a few politicians not a good idea?

Burning oil fields, as seen in the Gulf War, create massive air pollution plumes that can linger for months.

Then bombing, shelling, and land clearing destroys forests, wetlands, and habitats, with scorched-earth tactics and deforestation – sometimes deliberate – wiping out entire ecosystems. Often the soil and water is contaminated and unexploded ordnance makes land unsafe for wildlife and prevents ecological recovery.

Continuing to extract oil, gas, and coal is a bad idea because it accelerates climate change, destroys ecosystems, harms human health, and locks societies into infrastructure that becomes more dangerous and costly over time. The

evidence spans environmental science, public health, and human rights research.

We do seem to have fewer genuine “leaders” in the world, with the void often filled by delusional dictators and con artists.

If we, as citizens, want to create a more liveable, equitable and prosperous world, we need to have our voices heard so that leaders are accountable and responsive to the needs of people.

“Democracy” and “the-rule-of-law” need everyone’s support.

■ Fraser is founder of the community-building websites flightdec.com, redoornet and inhub.org.nz

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ŌTAKI STREET SCENE



Sophia Parun, (Kāi Tahu, Croatian).



Pania of The Reef: Messini Palace (Ngāti Apakura, Waikato Tainui, Ngāpuhi).

ŌTAKI DISTRICT ARTS, ATTRACTIONS AND EVENTS

Ngahuru/Autumn 2026

Total of 111 films for Māoriland 2026

The Maoriland Film Festival 2026 opens on March 24, with a personal and historical perspective keynote address from prominent Maori filmmaker Te Kohe Tuhaka at Rangiatea Church.

Te Kohe is an actor and producer from a proudly te reo Māori-speaking whānau in Turanga-nui-a-Kiwa (Gisborne), and is a graduate of Toi Whakaari. Known for his versatility across film, television, and theatre, he also works behind the camera championing Māori-led storytelling.

Māoriland's opening night at Ngā Purapura is a captivating, epic historical drama, *Uiskaringitara*, that blends the supernatural with a powerful Arctic love story. This is the Canadian film's Pacific premiere.

Igloodik, Nunavut, 2000 BCE. Kaujak (Theresia Kappianaq) and Sapa (Haiden Angutimarik) were promised to each other at birth. After the sudden death of Kaujak's father, her mother marries a man from another camp tearing the young lovers apart. The promise of a better life quickly turns to a nightmare, with aggressive suitors backed by an evil shaman vying to



Te Kohe Tuhaka

win Kaujak's hand. But Kaujak resists, holding on to hope that Sapa will one day make things right.

THROUGH OUR LENS: VICTORIA is a powerful collection of short films created by Victorian First Nations young leaders as part of a bi-national cultural and filmmaking exchange between Victoria, Australia, and Aotearoa. Developed through an intensive five-day filmmaking camp on Boonwurrung land, these films are grounded in Indigenous ways of seeing, knowing, and telling stories. Participants explored themes of identity, belonging, leadership, and self-determination with support from IndigUcation and the Māoriland team. Through Our Lens premieres at Ngā Purapura on Wednesday, March 25, at 9.45am.

For those of us who whakapapa to Ngāi

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For those of us who whakapapa to Ngāi

- 111 films
- 19 feature films
- 89 short films
- 130 Indigenous nations
- 27 countries
- 70 Indigenous language films
- 28 first-time filmmakers
- 40 Aotearoa films
- 52 wāhine filmmakers

Tāhu, the documentary *The Bones of Our Past* will be of great interest. It's the story of Takahanga Marae in Kaikōura. The film is a tribute to the resilience of tangata whenua of the marae, and the journey to recover their land and culture. This debut documentary from Cilla Harnett and Ngāti Kuri and seasoned director Rick Harvie, is a cinematic narrative of a community reflected in many of our iwi in Aotearoa. In 1977 on a cold bleak day in Kaikōura, Ngāti Kuri kaumātua Rangi Solomon, and a young Tipene O'Regan, drove up to a big paddock on top of the Kaikōura peninsula. Rangi told Tipene that he wanted his help to get the land back, to build the future of their people on "the bones of their past". Rangi died the next day. The documentary is narrated by the people of Ngāti Kuri, Ngāi

Tāhu, and follows the reconstruction of the whareniui, Maru Kaitātea, at Takahanga Marae, reestablishing their cultural identity and status as tangata whenua.

Thirty years after the landmark Sealord settlement, feature documentary, *Mana Moana, Mana Tangata*, goes inside the Māori fishing world to ask what tino rangatiratanga on the ocean really looks like today. Tracing more than 150 years of dispossession, resistance and legal battles, the film reveals how Māori turned the coloniser's own systems into tools of survival, and ultimately, self-determination. Woven through contemporary stories of Māori fishers across the industry, it explores how a global-first, pan-iwi Treaty settlement reshaped access to the sea, and whether its promise has truly delivered for whānau, hapū and iwi. It's a powerful David-and-Goliath story of endurance, strategy and cultural revival, led by those who live its legacy every day. It screens at 10am on Friday, March 27, at Ngā Purapura.

■ For full programme and tickets see: mff.maorilandfilm.co.nz, or at Māoriland Hub.



Reunion for Ōtaki College's 76ers

About 90 students who left Ōtaki College about 1976 gathered for a reunion in Ōtaki with teachers of the era on the weekend of March 7-8.

While there was a tour of the college and local schools that many had attended in their primary years, it the Saturday dinner at the Rāhui Rugby Club rooms that provided the best opportunity for reminiscing and catching up with school friends.

Many had not seen old friends for 50 or more years. The reunion was organised by 1976 leaver Roy Chung.

LEFT: Teachers at the reunion dinner, from left, Matt Coxon, Bruce Farthing, Dale Curran, Rod Graham and Robert Heath. Photo Ōtaki Today

■ Other photos from the dinner on Ōtaki Today's Facebook page



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ŌTAKI STREET SCENE



Call to action on the threat of climate change

FLUID BODIES: Charlotte Crichton.

until June 14. Toi Mahara, Te Manawa Toi | Coastlands Gallery.

A trip to India inspired Wellington-based artist Charlotte Crichton to create an art installation that provides the viewer with a vivid reminder of the threat climate change poses to the planet.

Fluid Bodies is an immersive exhibition that combines sculpture, light and sound to create a spectacular metaphor for the finely tuned balance of the earth's systems, highlighting the interaction between the ocean and atmosphere.

The show is part of the programme for the Aotearoa NZ Festival of the Arts and also the first major installation work presented at Toi MAHARA since its redevelopment in 2023.

"It was always my intention for Fluid Bodies to act as a platform to bring communities together to discuss meaningfully, climate crisis action and solutions," says Charlotte.

"This perfectly choreographed system – two fluid bodies – 'talking' to one another, distributing and regulating heat around the globe, creates a Goldilocks climate that enables all life on earth to thrive."

"It was so poetic to me I was driven to make an immersive and sensory work that would emotionally engage audiences and where people could experience a sense of awe and one-ness toward this complex interconnected system."

Apathy towards the climate crisis and the earth's degenerating ecosystems prompted Charlotte Crichton to close her studio door and engage more directly with climate change issues.

Completing a Master of Climate Change Science and Policy at Victoria University of Wellington deepened her interest and focused her research on how to change climate change behaviour.

"It is really this research that forms the manifesto for my creative practice today," she says.

She also set out to shed light on a new material to prove that a sustainable ethic was possible. She looked for scientists, engineers and innovators in the Asia-Pacific area with whom she might collaborate.

She found Indonesian biotechnology company MYCL which produces the plant-based, leather-equivalent fabric called Mylea from which the 34 sculptures in the exhibition are made.



Charlotte Crichton inside the installation, Fluid Bodies.

Credit: Amber-Jayne Bain.

"Collaborating with MYCL was important because we all know that the impacts of climate change disproportionately affect the global South," she says.

"Showcasing new sustainable material from this part of the world not only helped to create an awareness that a positive pro-environmental future is possible, but it also aims to inspire conversations around climate injustice and the need for us to act as a global community to safeguard a liveable climate."

One of the features of the installation is the quadraphonic soundtrack, composed, designed and performed (with contributions from others) by the artist. "I combined field recordings including scientific instruments that NIWA uses to monitor greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and other natural

recordings, alongside more conventional acoustic instruments to create an aural narrative for the work."

Charlotte Crichton has worked as an artist and researcher for 20 years, in Aotearoa and overseas. She has designed and delivered content for large-scale projects in national and oral history collections and for national museum exhibitions.

As well as a Master of Climate Change Science and Policy, she also holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree (filmmaking), a Graduate Certificate in Museum and Heritage Studies and a Certificate in Wai Ora Water Resource Management and Sustainability.

She has exhibited in Christchurch, Wellington and New Plymouth and held the Earthskin Artistic Residency in 2019.



Kāpiti Coast District Gallery



LOTUS RISING, TE ARA KOROWAU

until May 24 | Waipuna Toi | Community Space

Art made by attendees of Te Ara Korowai, a creative wellbeing centre at Raumati Beach.

Left: Leaves of Change has been created from the reclaimed artworks of members, collaged to form the base for the Te Ara Korowai tree emblem. It sits in a recycled frame. The colourful tree represents the strength, support and resilience derived from working together.

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The ReClayed team with March's guest artists, painters Sienna Fuller (middle, dark top) and Sarah Mills (far right). Photo supplied

Reclaimed clay in exhibition

Sustainability, creativity and emerging talent come together in a new exhibition at the Ōtaki Pottery Club's Tote Modern gallery this month.

The March exhibition, ReClayed, showcases the club's clay recycling team alongside guest painters Sarah Mills and 15-year-old budding artist Sienna Fuller. The exhibition offers them both the opportunity to display their work in a gallery setting for the first time.

The exhibition also celebrates a practical initiative that has become central to the club's operations – recycling clay that would otherwise go to waste.

Unfired clay left over from classes, member projects, trimmings, experiments and even the occasional collapsed pot is collected by the club's clay recycling team. The material is then mixed, rehydrated and processed back into a smooth, workable form using specialised equipment.

Because clay that has not yet been fired can always be rehydrated and reshaped, it provides a rare material opportunity – the chance to begin again.

"It's a practical and positive initiative that sits at the

heart of how the club operates," says the club's events and marketing manager, Kylie Van Dyke.

The recycling programme reduces landfill and lowers disposal costs for the club, while also conserving the significant energy and water required to make new clay.

Once processed, the recycled clay is resold at a discounted rate to club members and the wider community, making the material more accessible – as well as supporting sustainable practice.

While some of the pieces in the exhibition might not have been made using recycled clay, it recognises the team behind the process and the philosophy that supports it.

Kylie says the exhibition reflects a broader culture within the studio, where experimentation is encouraged and materials are respected.

■ *ReClayed, Tote Modern at Ōtaki racecourse, Te Roto Rd, Ōtaki. Open 10am-3pm Friday to Sunday.*



Coffee & Chat co-ordinator Brett Rothwell and Johanna Hauraki enjoying Sasha Routh's cello music.

Photo Ōtaki Today

Sasha's cello livens lunch gathering

The cello music of Ōtaki's Sasha Routh added to the cordial atmosphere of the weekly lunch gathering at the Gertrude Atmore Lounge recently.

The Community Coffee & Chat is on every Monday (bar public holidays) and open to anyone who wants to pop in with friends or family, to have someone to talk to, or just to meet anyone new and have a snack.

The addition of musician Sasha to the meeting on February 23 was something special for the group, who number anything from 20 up to 90. She played some of her favourite solo Bach pieces and a few Beatles songs, happily playing as people listened, or just chatted.

"I'm quite used to being in the background," she says. "When you've done a few weddings and other special occasions, you're not there as a centrepiece."

Originally from England, Sasha gained a degree in music from Dartington College of Arts in Devon. She went on to gain a post-graduate degree in music teaching from Bretton Hall College of Higher Education in Wakefield. After teaching strings in Durham and more recently

Palmerston North she felt it was time for a change of direction. So in 2020 she returned to study at Victoria University in Wellington and gained a master's degree in education policy.

Specialising in cello, Sasha has played with the Kāpiti Concert Orchestra, the Kāpiti Chorale and the Manawatū Sinfonia – as well as at weddings, funerals, birthdays and other private functions.

The Monday meetings run from 10am-1pm. They are organised by Brett Rothwell saw the need for informal community gatherings.

"We welcome everyone – from young families through to elderly people," he says "There's no formalities, no talks – just a chance to enjoy other people's company."

Visitors can have a free light lunch - koha appreciated but not expected. The gatherings are funded by donations, including grants from the Ōtaki Community Board.

ŌTAKI STREET SCENE



MY ŌTAKI KAI

By DEBBI CARSON



Competition for big fish

The Kāpiti Big Fish Surfcasting Competition, hosted by the Ōtaki Boating Club, is set to hit the waves again at Ōtaki Beach on the weekend of April 18-19.

Starting at 6.30am til 2pm on the Saturday, and 6.30am-1pm on the Sunday, it's set to be another fun-filled weekend with family and friends, soaking up some sunshine and beachside banter while fishing for the "big one".

Anglers who land a prize catch can win cash prizes for the heaviest snapper and kahawai, along with daily prizes, runner-up prizes, and spot prizes.

The Kāpiti Coast is great for surfcasting, with long stretches of beach, plenty of fish, and a relaxed coastal atmosphere. Other good Kāpiti fishing beaches include Peka Peka, Raumati and Paraparaumu.

After a day by the water, there's no shortage of places to eat, from casual bites to local craft beer. Stay the night in a boutique retreat, a glamping spot, or a classic coastal bach. Cast a line, enjoy the views, and experience the best of Ōtaki and the rest of Kāpiti.

Farmer Max values garden-fresh

By Debbi Carson

For Ōtaki farmer Max Lutz, a barbecue isn't complete without the addition of fresh vegetables.

Max's insistence isn't just for them to be fresh – they have to be the freshest, and that means straight from the home garden.

"You just can't beat the taste of veggies that have been picked and cooked within minutes," he says. "There's no comparison with veggies that have sat on a shelf for days."

Max has a particular passion for growing – and eating – jersey benne potatoes. They're renowned as premium, early-season potatoes, the ideal accompaniment to summer barbecues.

Max has lived on the family farm in the upper reaches of Rāhui Road all his life, continuing a home garden valued by his forebears. It keeps him and the family happily fed year-round.

Growing up in Ōtaki, Max has always been aware of the special relationships between the farmers and market gardeners of the town. Both formed the lifeblood of Ōtaki's economy in the days when Max was a founding pupil of Waitohu School in 1963.

There was a mutual respect for each other's resilience. The trials and tribulations were inevitable when family income relied on the vagaries of the weather and prevailing market prices.

Almost all the commercial gardeners are gone, and the number



of working farms has also dwindled – running small operations has simply become unviable.

Like his father, Max has made his mark in Ōtaki. He's been chair of the Friends of the Ōtaki River for nearly 25 years, is chair of the XŌtaki Alumni Trust, and is active in many other community initiatives.

Veggies the star in barbecued chicken skewers

MAX LUTZ'S love of homegrown vegetables has inspired this simple, fresh barbecue recipe that makes the vegetables the star.

Chicken & garden vegetable BBQ skewers

Ingredients (serves 4)

- 2 boneless chicken breasts, cut into chunks
- 1 red capsicum, chopped
- 1 yellow capsicum, chopped
- 1 zucchini, sliced into thick rounds
- 1 red onion, cut into chunks
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes
- 1 cup mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt and pepper
- Optional fresh veggie side*
- 2 cups mixed salad greens



- 1 cucumber, sliced
- 1 avocado, diced
- ½ cup grated carrot
- Olive oil and balsamic vinegar
- Method*
- Marinate – in a bowl, mix olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, paprika, oregano, salt & pepper.

Marinate the chicken

Add the chicken chunks and toss well. Leave for at least 20–30 minutes.

Assemble the skewers – thread chicken, capsicum, zucchini, onion, mushrooms and cherry tomatoes alternately onto skewers.

Preheat the barbecue

Heat to medium-high and lightly oil the grill. Grill the skewers – cook for 10–12 minutes, turning until the chicken is cooked through and vegetables are lightly charred.

Fresh salad – Toss greens, cucumber, avocado and carrot with a drizzle of olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

To serve

Place the skewers on a platter and squeeze over a little extra fresh lemon. Serve with the crisp salad and warm bread if desired.

Tip: If you want to keep it fully vegetarian, swap the chicken for halloumi or firm tofu – both grill beautifully on a barbecue.

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A good-sized broccoli head, relies first on a good-sized broccoli plant. Take care of the basics – healthy seedlings, healthy soil and homemade compost – and that’s exactly what you’ll create.

EDIBLE GARDEN



KATH IRVINE

Over-feeding with manure or fertiliser creates huge, leafy plants with tiny heads; compact, dry, or poorly drained soil creates tiny plants with even tinier heads.

Soil prep

Start on a win by choosing your best soil. As a baseline, it shouldn’t be compact

and it needs to drain well. Broccoli have generous root systems that want to spread out and dive down.

Aerate to sort any compaction problems, and elevate seedling roots above in ridges or mounds of compost. Spread a fine layer of compost if your soil smells good and is wormy. Use more where soil is poor.

Plants

Quality seedlings make a huge difference to the end result. Look for flat, green foliage with no yellow or purple tinges and sturdy stems. The roots shouldn’t make the plastic bulge. Squeeze the plug – if its like concrete, choose another tray.

Plant each seedling with due space – 30-40cm apart depending on variety. If I’m confident in my soil, I push the plants closer together, and if not, spread them farther apart.

Sit the seedlings in some dilute seaweed or worm wees, and if you really want to charge things up, spray the soil as well. A handful of vermicastings with each seedling is epic.

Mulch is the final piece, preferably living, and if not, definitely homemade. Plant seedlings into an existing living mulch/ greencrop, or sow a living mulch around the new seedlings. A mix is best – monocultures are competitive, whereas polycultures are collaborative.

Use greencrops and flowers like phacelia, calendula, crimson clover, lupin, daikon, flax and borage. Add some quick leafies like rocket, coriander, mitsuna or bokchoy to fill the gap before harvest.

Care

New seedlings need your eyes on them! If they don’t grow steadily from the get go, get on the job and check soil moisture, compaction (yes, you can aerate around planted seedlings), sunlight, and pests, then rectify whatever needs it. Weekly liquid feeds are an excellent idea, especially as growth slows with the cooling weather.

When plants reach full height, but before they head up, side dress soils that need it – spread a dollop (not a lot) of compost, vermicasts or well-rotten manure about the base of the stem.

For most varieties, the main head will be ready to harvest about 12 weeks after transplant. Cut it off quite high, leaving plenty of stalk for side shoots.

My favourite varieties are:

- De Cico – smaller heads but fast and reliable with prolific side shoots
- Romanesco – stunning conical, spiralling, bright green heads
- Purple sprouting – a six-month wait for harvest, but they are yum, and long lived.

■ *Kath has been growing vegetables to feed her family for 21 years. Spray-free, natural, low-input food gardens are her thing. Kath offers organic gardening advice through her articles, books, workshops, and garden consultations.*



A good sized broccoli seedling stands a good chance against slugs and snails.

Photos Kath Irvine



Broccoli is happy among a cacophany of other plants.



Purple sprouting broccoli is a great value crop.

HAUORA-PŪTAIO/Health-Science

Falling into the ‘do your own research’ trap

In the 1990s, the conspiracy theorist Milton William (Bill) Cooper – who, among other things, believed aliens were colluding with the US government – implored people to seek out the “truth” and popularised the phrase “do your own research”.

The slogan was quickly picked up by groups opposed to vaccination, who have long encouraged distrust of scientific institutions and experts. A perfect storm was forming. The

HEALTH SCIENCE



DR STEVE HUMPHRIES

rising popularity of alternative medicine implicitly challenges mainstream science and often overtly attacks it, effectively marketing mistrust in science. At the same time, the growing health-freedom movement elevates personal judgment above expert opinion and prioritises individual autonomy and choice over the perceived influence of the medico-industrial complex. Social-media influencers reinforce this dynamic by presenting themselves as independent thinkers who “do their own research”, but who can also have commercial incentives to create controversy, amplify fringe ideas, and question mainstream science or regulation.

This lack of trust in established medical

science is exemplified by Robert F Kennedy Jr urging parents to “do their own research” on vaccines, adding: “This idea that you should trust the experts – a good mother doesn’t do that.” For those who opposed mask-wearing, social distancing, and vaccines, the Covid-19 pandemic turbocharged the “do your own research” movement, and with the rise of the internet and social media, the seeking and sharing of information has never been easier.

On the face of it, the rallying call of “do your own research” appears perfectly reasonable: don’t be gullible – seek out the truth for yourself and make up your own mind. And we all do our own “research” in everyday life: we compare television models before buying, we check which electricity provider offers the best rates, and we look up health information when we need clarity.

For instance, if I want information on measles and vaccination, I can consult Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand, HealthEd, or any number of medical-school and teaching-hospital websites and easily get reliable, evidence-based answers. But there are people who simply do not trust universities, mainstream science experts, or even the broader scientific consensus.

Healthy scepticism is fine, but when it comes to complex issues in the health sciences – such as the causes of autism or vaccine safety – rejecting mainstream science and attempting to “do your own research” is fraught with difficulties and pitfalls. There are myriad ways it can go wrong.

For scientists, “research” refers to a rigorous,

structured process of enquiry, and becoming a researcher is a professional qualification earned through years of advanced academic training. A PhD is more than mastery of a body of facts; it’s fundamentally a qualification in how to evaluate information while compensating for the inherent fallibility of the human mind.

Human reasoning is riddled with predictable biases, including: confirmation bias, where we seek information that supports our beliefs; motivated reasoning, where we bend evidence toward preferred conclusions; confounding bias, where we overlook confounds and infer causality from correlation; pattern-seeking, where we perceive structure in noise; and overconfidence when learning new material – a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The scientific method exists precisely to counter these distortions, because left unchecked they make us remarkably poor at reliably discovering truth.

When people “do their own research”, it’s highly unlikely they are applying the rigour required for genuine scientific enquiry. Instead, they typically start with a preferred belief and then simply seek out information to confirm it.

For example, early in the pandemic, advocates of ivermectin as a Covid-19 treatment circulated online the results of an in-vitro study showing that the drug could kill the SARS-CoV-2 virus in a petri dish. What wasn’t covered was that the concentration required was so high it would be impossible to achieve safely in a human. In other words, the real takeaway from the study was not that ivermectin was promising, but that it was unlikely to be useful. Yet people extract

the fragment of information that aligns with their beliefs and twist it into “evidence”.

Finding information online is easy; evaluating it is the real challenge. Without the background knowledge or training needed to judge evidence, people doing their own research struggle to assess the quality and trustworthiness of studies – if they consider it at all. Consequently, methodologically weak preprints and retracted, debunked, or poorly designed studies, including those from predatory journals, are routinely mistaken for legitimate evidence.

For a non-expert to assume they can distinguish truth from misinformation more reliably than the combined expertise of the world’s qualified specialists reflects an extraordinary degree of misplaced confidence.

In fact, people who claim to “do their own research” rarely engage directly with the primary scientific literature. More often, they rely on blogs, forums, YouTube explainers, or sensationalist news sites to provide an interpreted version of the science.

Once mainstream science is dismissed and trust in scientific institutions erodes, their “research” reduces to seeking out information and commentators that affirm their worldview, regardless of how unreliable or poorly sourced that material is.

■ Health scientist Dr Steve Humphries is a director at Hebe Botanicals in Ōtaki. He was previously a lecturer at Massey University and director of the Health Science Programme.

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CAB helping with everyday challenges

THE THEME for Citizens Advice Bureau Awareness Week (March 9-15) is “Tūturu te tangata, tūturu te tautoko – real people, real support”.

In a world that is increasingly digital first or digital only, CAB is focused on providing support that is free, confidential, and non-judgemental, and our face-to-face and phone services are complemented by our online presence, not replaced by it.

Our various hapori face real issues every day. While a heap of information is online, being

GOOD ADVICE



MARIA FYVIE

able to talk about a challenge or question out loud can really help. When you're talking with a CAB volunteer, face-to-face or over the phone, our priority is to listen and to tautoko you with information and advice that helps you understand your rights. We work with you to

help you figure out the steps to take to overcome your challenge. Or sometimes, you just need us to Google the bus timetable – we can do that, too!

It might sound a bit airy-fairy but the everyday action in the bureau is kōrero – so many people start with “I'm not sure if you'll be able to help me...” and we go from there.

People in Ōtaki are living in mouldy rentals and aren't sure how to talk to their landlord, they want to apply for rates rebates but don't have online access to prove their income, or they want to apply for ID but don't have their birth certificate. Tell us what you need and we'll work through that with you – we might suggest a specialist agency for you to contact, we might call a government department together or we might help you download an app. The option you think is best for you might be different to someone else in the same situation – the joy of talking to a person is figuring out where that flexibility is (because sometimes, there's no avoiding doing the hard thing).

When we're not talking to clients we're talking to each other, sharing local knowledge and updating each other on changes we've read are happening (did you know you can free text “3G” to 550 to find out if your phone is still supported when the 3g network shuts at the end of March?) as well as talking to others in the community about how we can work with them to fill unmet needs.

But there's no point in talk without action! While our volunteers offer time and presence, the wider CAB takes action with advocacy. The insights gained from the Ōtaki community are combined with insights from around the motu and are used to advocate for laws, policies and services that protect and support people's human rights and wellbeing – see our website to read many of our national reports and submissions: cab.org.nz/what-we-do/social-justice

When you come to us for help, you will speak with volunteers who want to support and empower people. You don't have to be a New Zealand citizen or resident to receive our assistance. We're here for everyone. No matter who you are; if you need support and don't know who to ask – ask us!

■ You can ask our volunteers in person at 65a Main Street between 10am and 1pm Monday – Friday, or call us on 364 8664. We know that our hours don't always align with yours so support is also available from CAB Kāpiti in Coastlands, CAB Levin at 87 Oxford St, and nationwide on 0800 367 222. Our website also has answers to more than 2500 questions – see cab.org.nz – but it can't Google the bus timetable for you!

The cross-lease conundrum

IF YOU OWN a cross-lease property, you might feel like you are both a landlord and a tenant on the land you own.

This unique, and sometimes problematic, New Zealand title structure combines shared freehold ownership of land with a long-term lease (typically 999 years) for your specific dwelling.

This form of title became popular from the 1970s, largely as a development tool to bypass the costs and requirements associated with a full fee simple subdivision.

However, what was once a pragmatic work-around is now widely recognised as an inherently flawed system that creates significant risks for homeowners.

The hidden traps

The core issue with cross-leases lies in the complex web of shared rights and obligations between neighbours, which can lead to disputes.

Key problems include:

- **The permission trap** – Most cross-leases contain covenants that require you to obtain written consent from all other owners before making any structural alterations to your home. This can turn a simple renovation into a protracted negotiation, potentially allowing a neighbour to unreasonably block your plans.
- **Defective titles** – If a previous owner altered

their property without getting the required consent or updating the “flats plan” that maps the properties, the legal title is now inaccurate. This discrepancy between the physical reality and the legal documents can create major hurdles when you try to sell or refinance.

- **Management mayhem** – Unlike unit titles, cross-leases have no legally mandated body corporate to manage shared areas like driveways, gardens, or shared insurance policies. This lack of a formal structure can lead to unresolved disputes over maintenance, costs, and responsibilities.
- **Devaluation risk** – The inherent issues with cross-leases can negatively impact your property's value. Studies have found that these titles can hinder future development and that the property may be worth significantly less than an equivalent freehold property.

Path to freehold freedom

For owners looking to escape these constraints, the most effective solution is to convert the cross-lease into a modern, independent fee simple (freehold) title.

MATTERS OF LAW



CORINNA SIPPEL

This process dissolves the shared leasehold structure and is treated as a subdivision under the Resource Management Act 1991, requiring resource consent.

There are two primary routes to achieve this conversion:

1. **Conversion by agreement** – The most straightforward path is for all co-owners to unanimously agree to the conversion. This involves a formal subdivision application to the local council. However, owners should be aware that councils often treat this as an entirely new subdivision, potentially imposing conditions that require costly upgrades to shared infrastructure like drainage, driveways, or fire separation to meet current standards.
 2. **Conversion by court order** – If your neighbours refuse to agree, you can make an application to the High Court under section 339 of the Property Law Act 2007. This powerful provision allows the court to order a “partition” of the land, effectively overriding a lack of consent and compelling the creation of separate titles. This provides a crucial remedy for owners seeking to modernise their property rights and gain full autonomy over their asset.
- Corinna is a solicitor at Wakefields Lawyers – 04 9780 3600 or info@wakefieldslaw.com

When growth becomes controlled strain

WHEN did you last take two full weeks off – completely off – without checking your phone?

If you disappeared for a month, would performance remain steady? Would decisions still get made at the right level? Would customers notice you were gone? Or would everything subtly tighten... slow... wait?

YOUR BUSINESS



CHRIS WHELAN

Here's the uncomfortable possibility: You don't just run your business. You are the system that runs it. And that is why growth eventually slows.

How it starts

Every business begins with competence. You are the best operator. You make the strongest judgement calls. You handle clients well. You quote accurately. You solve problems fast. The business grows around your ability.

This works beautifully in the early stages. At \$500,000 in revenue, your involvement is strength. At \$1.5 million, it still works. You can hold the moving parts in your head.

But something subtle happens as you grow. Every time uncertainty appears, you step in. Every time something breaks, you fix it. Every time someone hesitates, you decide.

Without intending to, you train the business. It learns that the fastest path to certainty runs through you. This becomes the culture. Not written. Not announced. Just reinforced daily.

The invisible design flaw

Growth compounds complexity. Revenue increases. Team size increases. Client expectations increase.

But structure often does not increase at the same rate. Decision rights are unclear. Ownership of outcomes is fuzzy. Reporting cadence is inconsistent. Leadership layers are

thin. Ambiguity increases. And ambiguity always escalates upward.

You start noticing a pattern:

- problems land on your desk
- questions wait for your answer
- customers insist on speaking with you
- team members defer decisions.

You tell yourself: It's faster if I just handle it. In the short term, you're right. In the long term, you are reinforcing dependency.

This is not a people problem. It is a structural problem.

The \$1-5m wall

Many SMEs hit a ceiling somewhere between \$3 and \$5 million in revenue. Not because the market is hostile, not because demand disappears, but because personal capacity does not scale at the same rate as organisational complexity.

You cannot compound personal energy indefinitely. You can push harder. You can work longer. You can absorb more. But eventually, margin depends on your oversight. Quality depends on your involvement. Momentum depends on your presence.

That is not scale. That is controlled strain. And controlled strain always becomes visible over time.

There is a quiet frustration that creeps in at this stage. You start thinking: Why am I the only one who sees this? Why does everything come back to me? Why can't they think for themselves?

You might not say it out loud. But you feel it.

Here is the hard truth: Your team is not incapable. Your structure requires escalation.

When every significant decision ultimately flows upward, people learn to escalate. Not because they are weak – but because it is safe. If risk is absorbed at the top, decision-making concentrates at the top. You did not design this intentionally. But you did reinforce it repeatedly.

The commercial consequences

Owner dependence creates three long-term risks.

First, burnout. Sustained overload reduces judgement quality and strategic clarity.

Second, fragility. If performance relies on your presence, risk increases every time you step away.

Third, suppressed value. Buyers do not pay premium multiples for owner-dependent businesses. They discount them. Because if you leave and performance drops, that is not an asset. It is employment dressed as equity.

You did not build your business to own a job. But unless structure replaces dependency, that is what it becomes.

The strategic choice

Every serious business owner eventually faces a choice:

Remain indispensable, or build a system that works without you at the centre.

Being busy feels productive. Being central feels powerful. But centrality is dangerous. You do not scale a business by becoming more important. You scale it by becoming less operationally necessary. That shift requires intention.

What changes the trajectory

Working harder does not fix this stage. Hiring more staff does not fix it. Even improving time management does not fix it. The shift comes from structure.

Structure means:

- clear decision rights at each level
- defined ownership of outcomes
- installed leadership layers
- regular management cadence
- transparent reporting
- real accountability.

When structure strengthens, escalation reduces. When decision rights clarify, confidence grows. When leadership layers mature, growth resumes.

Overload is a stage. It is not a life sentence. But if you fail to recognise the stage you are in, you will mistake exhaustion for ambition.

And you will stay indispensable far longer than necessary.

■ Chris is a business and leadership coach based in the Wellington region. For more, visit chriswhelancoaching.com

This series of profiles on local businesses is supported by Land Matters and Pritchard Civil



The Books & Co team, from left Tracey Hall, Jacqui Simpson and Charlotte Hammond.
Photo Ōtaki Today

Local bookshop has bestselling formula

Books & Co owner Jacqui Simpson took a leap of faith in 2021, opening an independent bookshop in Ōtaki at a time when much of the world was shut down and the future uncertain.

Four years on, that gamble has paid off – not just for her business, but for a community that had been without a bookshop for nearly two decades.

“I just thought, if not now, then never,” Jacqui says of launching Books & Co in the middle of Covid-19 restrictions.

With overseas travel off the table and local independent bookstores elsewhere proving resilient, she decided the timing was as good as any to pursue a long-held dream. The response exceeded expectations.

“I knew people thought it was a good idea, but I didn’t know how the wider community would receive it,” she says. “People have been

genuinely delighted to have a bookshop here.”

Word of mouth quickly built a loyal customer base spanning all ages. While locals form the core, improved access after the expressway opened has drawn regular visitors not only from throughout the Kāpiti Coast, but also from regions north and south from Wellington.

Many now make a special trip, combining a bookstore visit with other shopping or family outings.

It is after all, the only independent bookstore between Foxton and Wellington.

Books & Co occupies distinctive, multi-space premises that have evolved as the business has grown. When the neighbouring Molly’s gift shop closed, Jacqui expanded into that area, retaining the front for gifts, but also expanding the children’s section. It was a decision driven by strong demand from parents, grandparents and teachers seeking quality books.

“Children’s books are incredibly important,”

she says. “Reading to kids, turning pages, having that physical experience – it matters.”

Despite years of predictions that digital media would eclipse print, Jacqui is confident about the future of books. She points to growing evidence that readers still value the tactile experience of a physical book, whether for comfort, concentration or the ability to share and revisit favourites. Young readers, in particular, continue to show enthusiasm for new titles.

Stocking the right range is both art and science. Jacqui personally handles most of the buying, guided by her own tastes, industry knowledge and an increasingly detailed understanding of customer preferences. The shop carries about 5000 titles across fiction, non-fiction, New Zealand history, Māori publications, gardening, cooking and more.

Beyond retail, Books & Co has become a cultural hub, hosting author talks, launches

and community events, as well as supporting schools and literacy initiatives.

“We don’t just want to sit back and sell books,” Jacqui says. “We want to be part of the community.”

The store will soon celebrate its fifth anniversary, a milestone Jacqui views as significant in a tough retail climate. Rising costs and cautious spending have made recent years challenging, but she remains optimistic.

“This is a growing place, and people want to shop locally if they can,” she says. “A book is still something special.”

With a dedicated team, strong community ties and a clear sense of purpose, Books & Co appears firmly woven into Ōtaki’s future – proof that even in a digital age, a well-loved neighbourhood bookshop can still thrive.

■ Books & Co, 216 Old State Highway, Ōtaki. booksandco.co.nz



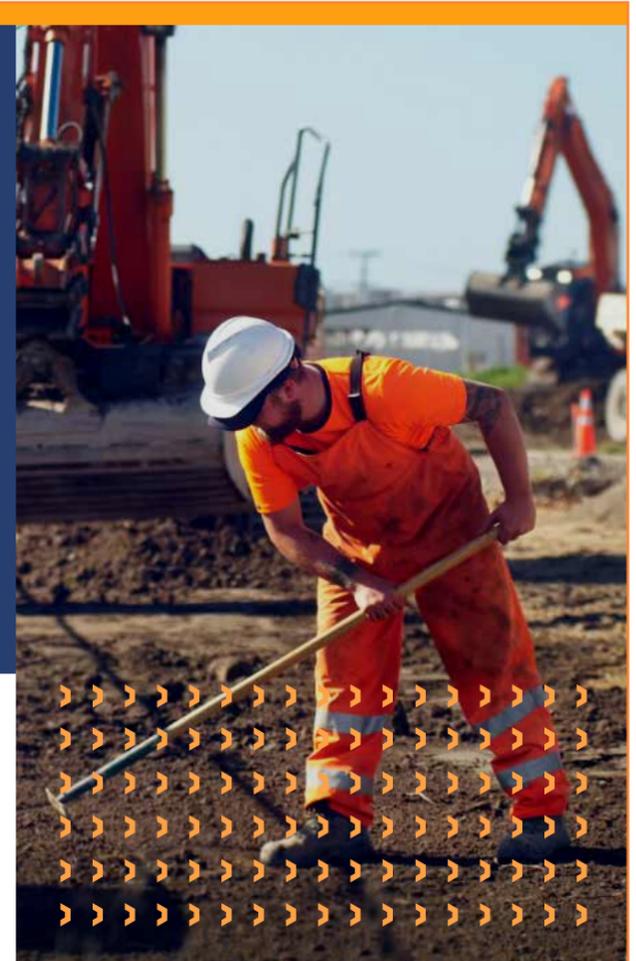
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HĪTŌRIA/History

Little op shop with a big heart

For its size, Ōtaki has its fair share of op shops. Some have been short-lived, others have remained for decades.

While the latter are frequented by bargain hunters and second-hand dealers from other places, it is the locals that visit most often. Some people are out to find a treasure or a bargain, but many rely on these shops for everyday items and clothing.

One shop in particular was explicitly set up for this purpose, rather than to support regional or national charities. Unusually, the board that runs Cobwebs Opshop is made up of representatives from churches of different denominations who, some 30 years ago, saw a need that they felt they could help meet by providing second-hand essentials at low prices.

The shop began in a room at Hadfield Hall, part of All Saints, the Anglican-Methodist church in Te Rauparaha Street. After 11 years it outgrew this space and finally ended up in Main Street, where it retains its unassuming nature and the original kaupapa of its origins.

Cobwebs isn't flashy, and it still isn't a very big shop. While it doesn't have a lot of stock, what is there is largely the essentials. It's very rare to find furniture there as there simply isn't the room, but if what's needed is clothing, kitchenware, kids' stuff that's in good nick and affordable, it will be there.

A curious feature of this little shop is the large vault with its heavy metal door. This is a remnant of its past life as the premises of law firm Harper, Atmore, Roussell & McLaren, whose own establishment happened early in Ōtaki's history. The law firm was in one of the early buildings on Main Street, and under various names, operated for nearly a century.

The churches involved in the original purpose to assist those in need have been here at least as long as the law firm in whose premises Cobwebs is located. The board now includes a representative for the more recent Hub church, but its intentions remain the same as at its inception.

Its current tenants' operations don't stop at selling goods.

The board that oversees it also set up Cobblers, which offers soup and social

interaction for koha. The Thursday lunchtime gatherings are very popular, particularly with older members of the community. During the Covid pandemic, its volunteers kept a close eye on its regulars by delivering soup - a service that still exists today for the house-bound members of the community that they are aware of.

Tamariki and families are catered for also, through the Breakfast Club at Ōtaki School. Other acts of charity include providing cheap firewood to people who are in difficult and/or urgent circumstances.

These days, a new breed of shoppers visit this and other op shops, still seeking a bargain but also with an increasing awareness of the effects of mass-production of shoddily made products, designed to last only a season before being thrown in the landfill. Rarely lasting long enough to be re-cycled through second hand use, the tatty remains of these products sit in the earth, ironically lasting for years rather than decomposing.

Yes, they're cheap, but that isn't because the manufacturers are charitable types - in fact it's the reverse. These products are cheap not only because of the poor quality of the materials but also because of the use of low-paid labour churning the goods out under appalling conditions.

Often, the treasures discovered at an op shop have values extending beyond their intended use. Made from materials and with a level of craftsmanship that would cost an arm and a leg to replicate these days, such items represent a time and an ethos that we are not likely to witness again. A 50 year-old hand-painted, wooden handled kitchen utensil is indeed a treasure - it's likely to last that long again, for one thing.

So, while some would argue that low-priced goods don't need to be used goods these days, it is often a false economy. Indeed, for a few dollars more, some of these items can be purchased brand new from offshore online companies - but that comes with a whole different cost.

■ *Nicky is a former journalist with an interest in local history.*



OUR HERITAGE

NICKY TREADWELL



Cobwebs volunteer Janet Lang at the door of the vault that once housed the legal papers and items for law firm Harper, Atmore, Roussell and McLaren. Photo Ōtaki Today



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WHERE TO FIND ŌTAKI TODAY

Ōtaki Today has news stands at RiverStone Café, Ōtaki New World, Ōtaki Library, Café SixtySix, Manakau Market, Sponge Kitchen Levin, Waikanae Library, Olive Grove Cafe Waikanae, and Paraparaumu Library. It is also available at several other outlets, including The Big Egg, Watson's Garden, Sunlong, and The Nest.

ŌTAKI VS RĀHUI c1940-50



THIS old undated photo is from a game between the Rāhui and Ōtaki rugby clubs. Knowing many of the names, we're picking this was in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Written on the back of the photo supplied by Irene Mackle, the late Borgia Hakaraia had identified most of the names as below. The Ōtaki players are denoted as "O"; Rāhui "R" and wearing their traditional striped jersey.

Most of those in the far back row are hard to pick out, but Borgia was able to identify some of them, from left: unknown, Digger Carkeek (O), unknown, Jack Marshall (O), ? Merwood (R), unknown, Jack MacLeod (O), Jim Spiers (R), and Robbie Winterburn (O).

Standing from left: Tazzy Hakaraia, against fence (O), Larry Enoka (O), unknown, unknown, unknown, Martin Shaw (O), Pat Roach (R), John Taratoa (O), Wiki Cook (R), Hawke Winterburn (O), Willie Johnson (R), Tom Gray (O), Wehi Royal (R), Willie Taratoa (O), and Wally Foster (R).

Front row: Seth Russell (O), Bob Hakaraia (O), Whata Davis (R), Marv Hakaraia (O), unknown (R), Peter Hakaraia (R), Jack Winterburn (R), referee John Huff (O), unknown (R), Bill Tahiwī (R), Guvvy Enoka (O), George Gray (O), Ned Gray (O). Ball boy in front Boysie Barrett. Please email unknown names or corrections to debby@idmedia.co.nz



ŌTAKI PRIMARY SCHOOL 1966:

Thanks to Theresa Donnelly nee Ludlam (who isn't in this class), we have an update and corrections to last month's class photo.

Back row: Dawson Wilson, Simon Winterburn, Owen Larson, Alan Turner, Russell Growcott, unknown, Philip Hosie.

Middle row: Teacher Miss Carter, Meihana Edwards, Jamie MacDonald, Raymond Shields, Noel Wells, Pete Housiaux, Kevin Bird, unknown.

Front row: Lorraine Winiata, Raewyn Smith, Sharon Templey, Diana Hunt, Christine Windley, Joanne Collins, Lesley Carpenter, Lesley Ferretti, Diane Edhouse, (Heather Seng), Connie Edwards.

GOT OLD PHOTOS?

If you have old school photos – or any photos of old Ōtaki – please get in touch. We're building our archive so we can keep publishing snapshots of life when the town and district were younger. Email us, including names and other information if you can. Contact debby@idmedia.co.nz with additions or corrections to captions.

FROM NGĀ TAONGA SOUND & VISION ARCHIVES

When the talkies came to town

As Ōtaki gears up for the 13th Māoriland Film Festival, it's worth looking at how far the movie industry has come in the past century.

Almost 100 years ago, Wellington moviegoers witnessed the country's first ever "talkie" at the Paramount Theatre, Courtenay Place.

On March 8, 1929, a screening of five "talkie shorts", including an interview with the King of Spain, preceded the main feature, Frank Borzage's *Street Angel*.

Silent movies were usually screened with a live music accompaniment. However, this Oscar-winning film was

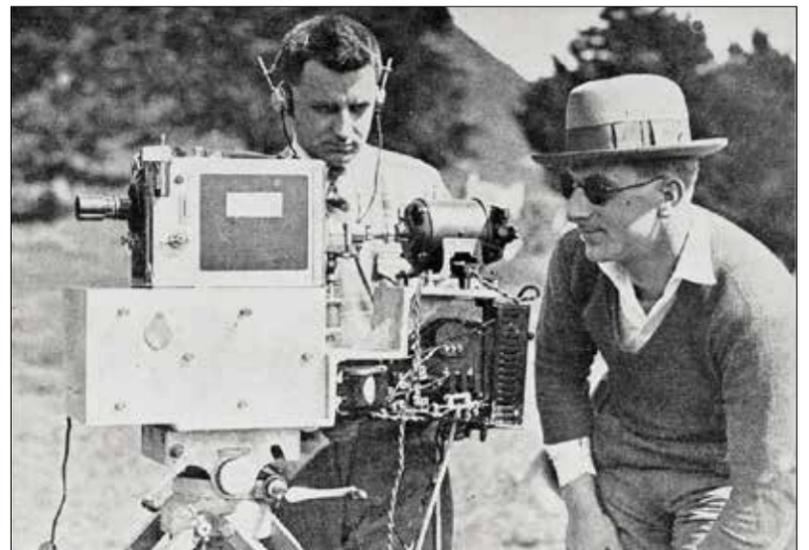
unique to audiences with its Movietone soundtrack containing the musical score and sound effects.

After talkies arrived in New Zealand, filmmaker Edwin (Ted) Coubray began developing his own sound-on-film system.

After six months' experimentation and some considerable expense, the Coubray-tone sound system was operational.

On January 3, 1930, the first New Zealand-made talkie debuted, with a public screening of *Coubray-tone News* at Auckland's Plaza Theatre.

For more on this cinematic period, *Mouth Wide Open: A Journey in Film with Ted Coubray* is available to view in the Ngā Taonga online collection: take a look by visiting ngataonga.org.nz (collection reference no. F36523).



The first attempt to make "talkies" in New Zealand. The sound machine, constructed in Auckland by New Zealand Radio Films, was in action at Mangere during the shooting of a movie in 1929. The image is from a supplement to the Auckland Weekly News, October 9, 1929. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections AWNS-19291009-50-02





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Ōtaki River entrance tides
March 11 - April 15

<https://www.metservice.com/marine/regions/kapiti-wellington/tides/locations/otaki-river-entrance>

Please note: The actual timing of high and low tide might differ from that provided here. Times are extrapolated from the nearest primary port for this location, so please take care.

		HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
WED 11 MAR	03:34	09:52	16:05	22:16	-	-
THU 12 MAR	04:39	11:04	17:16	23:29	-	-
FRI 13 MAR	06:05	12:29	18:38	-	-	-
SAT 14 MAR	-	00:55	07:29	13:44	19:54	-
SUN 15 MAR	-	02:08	08:29	14:39	20:51	-
MON 16 MAR	-	02:59	09:14	15:23	21:36	-
TUE 17 MAR	-	03:41	09:52	16:01	22:14	-
WED 18 MAR	-	04:18	10:28	16:38	22:51	-
THU 19 MAR	-	04:55	11:04	17:16	23:28	-
FRI 20 MAR	-	05:32	11:41	17:54	-	-
SAT 21 MAR	00:05	06:11	12:20	18:34	-	-
SUN 22 MAR	00:45	06:53	13:02	19:16	-	-
MON 23 MAR	01:27	07:38	13:47	20:02	-	-
TUE 24 MAR	02:13	08:28	14:38	20:52	-	-
WED 25 MAR	03:08	09:28	15:39	21:51	-	-
THU 26 MAR	04:16	10:40	16:52	23:05	-	-
FRI 27 MAR	05:42	12:02	18:16	-	-	-
SAT 28 MAR	-	00:31	07:09	13:21	19:39	-
SUN 29 MAR	-	01:50	08:17	14:25	20:44	-
MON 30 MAR	-	02:51	09:10	15:16	21:34	-
TUE 31 MAR	-	03:39	09:53	16:00	22:16	-
WED 1 APR	-	04:20	10:32	16:39	22:53	-
THU 2 APR	-	04:57	11:07	17:16	23:27	-
FRI 3 APR	-	05:32	11:41	17:50	23:59	-
SAT 4 APR	-	06:06	12:13	18:23	-	-
SUN 5 APR	00:30	05:38	11:45	17:56	-	-
MON 6 APR	00:02	06:12	12:19	18:30	-	-
TUE 7 APR	00:35	06:48	12:56	19:06	-	-
WED 8 APR	01:14	07:30	13:40	19:49	-	-
THU 9 APR	02:01	08:23	14:35	20:41	-	-
FRI 10 APR	03:04	09:30	15:43	21:48	-	-
SAT 11 APR	04:21	10:44	16:57	23:05	-	-
SUN 12 APR	05:36	11:54	18:07	-	-	-
MON 13 APR	-	00:16	06:37	12:50	19:05	-
TUE 14 APR	-	01:12	07:26	13:38	19:53	-
WED 15 APR	-	01:59	08:09	14:21	20:36	-



ŌTAKI MEETING

The next Horowhenua Branch meeting will be held upstairs in the Ōtaki Sports Club, Haruātai Park, off Mill Rd, Ōtaki, at 1.30pm on MONDAY MARCH 16.

Guest speaker: Simon Hills, Evolutionary Biologist and Ecologist at Massey University, will be talking on Powelliphanta Snails. Learn about this at-risk, endemic giant of the snail world.

All welcome to Forest and Bird's Branch meetings, and to join our guided walks, bird monitoring trips, mornings in our plant nursery, and working bees in Prouse Bush (a powelliphanta habitat).

For more information contact Claudia Mason (06) 367 0660 or Geoff Ritchie 027 373 4576.

Join Forest & Bird (children can join our Kid's Club: KCC), to protect the environment and enjoy the outdoors.

Carrfields

PRELIMINARY NOTICE

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Detailed List to follow

Contact:
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Ōtaki Yesterday

The next issue, featuring stories about the people and places of old Ōtaki, will be available soon.

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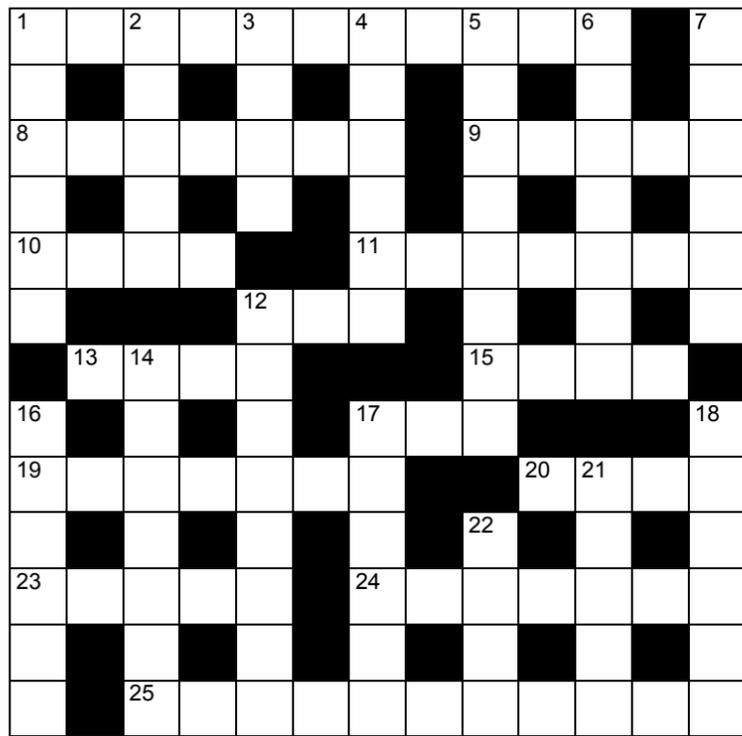


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THE CROSSWORD #NZ19571 (answers below)



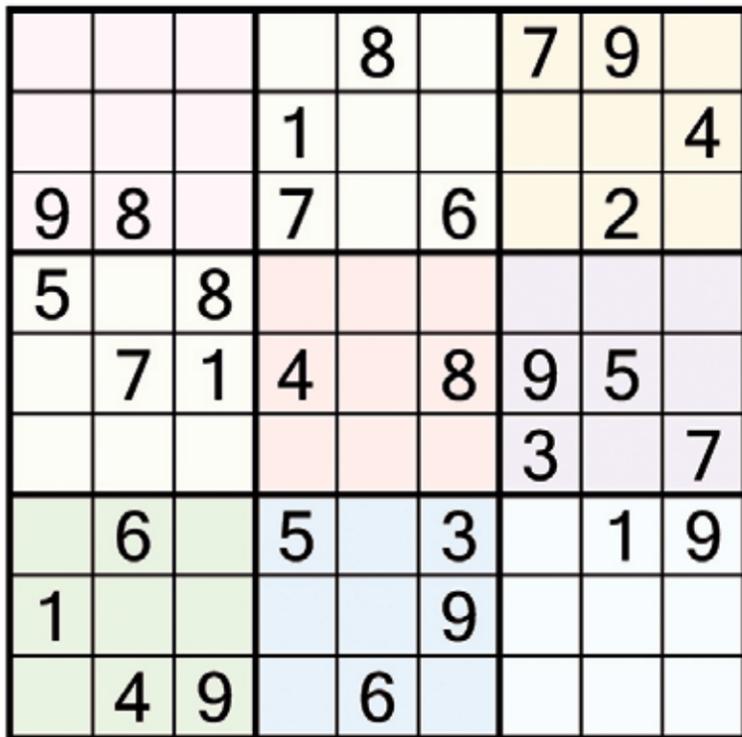
ACROSS

- 1 Essential New Zealand party snack (5,3,3)
- 8 Determined (7)
- 9 Māori name for a Mount Maunganui landmark (5)
- 10 Cooking chamber (4)
- 11 Search destructively (7)
- 12 New Zealander who won the Boston and New York City Marathon in 1981, Alison ___ (3)
- 13 Small island (4)
- 15 Comply (4)
- 17 Goods vehicle (3)
- 19 New Zealand creature with links back to the dinosaur age (7)
- 20 Region (4)
- 23 Underneath (5)
- 24 Drive mad (7)
- 25 Barbara Kendall's sport, now called boardsailing (11)

DOWN

- 1 Wax writing stick (6)
- 2 Picture (5)
- 3 Break suddenly (4)
- 4 Fourmylra song from 1969, re-released by The Muttonbirds in 1992 (6)
- 5 NZ's new status from 1907 (8)
- 6 Feathers (7)
- 7 Egg producers (colloq) (6)
- 12 Actress who starred as the older Whina Cooper in the 2022 film *Whina* (4,4)
- 14 Lacking depth (7)
- 16 Horse house (6)
- 17 Political party that was the forerunner to the Greens 1972-1990 (6)
- 18 Person of dubious character (inf) (3,3)
- 21 Māori youngster in Footrot Flats (5)
- 22 Blacken (4)

SUDOKU PUZZLES thepuzzlecompany.co.nz
 HARD #99H Use logic and process of elimination to fill in the blank cells using the numbers 1 through 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and 3x3 block. Answers opposite page.



SUDOKU SOLUTION #99H

2	1	6	3	8	4	7	9	5
7	5	3	1	9	2	8	6	4
9	8	4	7	5	6	1	2	3
5	3	8	9	2	7	6	4	1
6	7	1	4	3	8	9	5	2
4	9	2	6	1	5	3	8	7
8	6	7	5	4	3	2	1	9
1	2	5	8	7	9	4	3	6
3	4	9	2	6	1	5	7	8

KIWIANA WORD SEARCH ANSWERS

F	E	I	J	O	A	S	S	Q	U	A	R	E	S
D	B	F	R	I	T	T	E	R	S	N	A	I	F
U	K	M	E	A	T	P	I	E	S	Q	E	U	I
W	I	I	H	O	K	E	Y	P	O	K	E	Y	S
H	W	O	A	E	V	C	U	S	T	A	R	D	H
I	I	R	V	E	E	J	A	F	F	A	S	Q	A
T	F	V	N	S	O	A	T	A	F	G	H	A	N
E	R	L	K	M	A	R	M	I	T	E	T	O	D
B	U	D	A	E	D	E	X	C	M	V	M	D	C
A	I	K	L	M	E	W	H	A	N	G	I	Y	H
I	T	B	I	Z	B	I	S	C	U	I	T	S	I
T	Y	S	K	C	B	O	Y	S	T	E	R	S	P
X	C	K	I	W	I	A	N	A	O	W	S	W	S
C	O	K	P	A	V	L	O	V	A	X	Y	R	I

Trying to control another person is like trying to control the weather.
 You can't stop the rain, but you can carry an umbrella.
 You can't force the sun to shine, but you can open your blinds and let in the light.
 People are no different. You cannot force them to change, you cannot bend their behaviour to your will, and you cannot make them act the way you wish. The harder you try, the more frustrated and powerless you feel.
 But here's the truth: peace comes from control over yourself, not over others.
 You have the power to choose:

- How much of their behaviour you allow into your life.
- How you respond instead of react.
- Whether you carry their storm inside your heart – or let it pass like clouds across the sky.

Freedom begins when you stop demanding that others change and start protecting your own inner space.
 Because happiness isn't about controlling the weather – it's about learning how to walk gracefully through it.

FUNNY & SURPRISING QUIZ ANSWERS: 1. Wallpaper 2. Hippopotamus 3. Hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia 4. China. 5. Octopus. 6. Crushed bones or shells. 7. The common swift. 8. Tungsten. 9. 2. 10. Cacao beans. 11. Platypus. 12. South Africa (11). 13. Horse. 14. Tomato. 15. John Quincy Adams.

CROSSWORD #19571 ANSWERS Across: 1. Chips and dip, 8. Adamant, 9. Mauao, 10. Oven, 11. Ransack, 12. Roe, 13. Isle, 15. Obey, 17. Van, 19. Tuatara, 20. Area, 23. Below, 24. Unhinge, 25. Windsurfing. Down: 1. Crayon, 2. Image, 3. Snap, 4. Nature, 5. Dominion, 6. Plumage, 7. Chooks, 12. Rena Owen, 14. Shallow, 16. Stable, 17. Values, 18. Bad egg, 21. Rangī, 22. Char.

FUNNY & SURPRISING QUIZ Answers below.

1. What was bubble wrap originally invented for?
2. Which animal's milk is naturally pink?
3. What is the fear of long words humorously called?
4. Which country banned time travel in movies?
5. What creature has three hearts and blue blood?
6. What everyday item did ancient Romans use as a form of toothpaste ingredient?
7. Which bird can sleep while flying?
8. Which element's symbol is W due to its German name Wolfram?
9. What's the only even prime number?
10. Which food was once used as currency by the Aztecs?
11. Which mammal lays eggs?
12. Which country has the most official languages in daily national use?
13. Which animal sleeps standing up and can't vomit?
14. What vegetable was once considered poisonous in Europe?
15. Which US president supposedly kept a pet alligator at the White House (briefly)?

KIWIANA WORD SEARCH: answers page 19 thewordsearch.com

F	E	I	J	O	A	S	S	Q	U	A	R	E	S
D	B	F	R	I	T	T	E	R	S	N	A	I	F
U	K	M	E	A	T	P	I	E	S	Q	E	U	I
W	I	I	H	O	K	E	Y	P	O	K	E	Y	S
H	W	O	A	E	V	C	U	S	T	A	R	D	H
I	I	R	V	E	E	J	A	F	F	A	S	Q	A
T	F	V	N	S	O	A	T	A	F	G	H	A	N
E	R	L	K	M	A	R	M	I	T	E	T	O	D
B	U	D	A	E	D	E	X	C	M	V	M	D	C
A	I	K	L	M	E	W	H	A	N	G	I	Y	H
I	T	B	I	Z	B	I	S	C	U	I	T	S	I
T	Y	S	K	C	B	O	Y	S	T	E	R	S	P
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TAKĀRO/Sport

Padder tennis 'taking off'

By Ian Carson

The re-emergence of padder tennis as a sport is exciting Paul Grubi.

Paul has spent the past five years promoting padder tennis in local schools, to the point where many are now competing in local competitions and entering regional tournaments.

"It's taking off again," he says. "Some schools now have dedicated courts and there's a growing number of kids who are picking up a racquet and getting really good at it."

Padder tennis was popular in New Zealand schools in the latter part of last century, when the bats were more than likely made as part of woodworking projects. It died away, but has seen a recent resurgence.

"It is an iconic school playground game," says Paul, who established Padder Tennis New Zealand (PTNZ) and is chief

executive. "It's a great game and easy for youngsters to learn."

He says PTNZ is keen to encourage participation and competition in the hope that young people will gain the skills to move on to club and high-performance tennis.

Paul cut his teeth with padder tennis, before playing tennis at a national junior level. He gained a tennis scholarship in the United States and went on to play professional tennis before moving on to coaching.

His vision now?

"I want to give all Kiwi kids the opportunity to play padder tennis at school so that they have all the necessary skills to move on to tennis."



Full courts at Ōtaki Beach for a six-school padder tennis competition on March 5. Photo Ōtaki Today

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