

# COROMIND

Issue 23

## Hauraki-Coromandel Tracks and Trails

Connor de Gier explores the Kuaeranga  
Kauri Trail (Pinnacles Walk)

## White Wind in Thames

Pixi Robertson Takes Us on a Journey  
into the Visionary Art of Elizabeth Kyle

## Celebrating Conservation in our Communities

When local volunteers unite  
to protect and restore nature

## THE ARTS MATTER

Anusha Bhana Shares Insights on  
Creatives in Schools Across the Coromandel

Audio   
Version



Kia ora,

As we approach the end of the year, it's natural to reflect on those around us and offer a little extra kindness as we look back at how much we've achieved together. There's a greater sense of acceptance as we realise that, despite the challenges, we made it through. This is a beautiful example of universal love. So why not practise more of it?

Every month, Coromind brings vibrant colours and uplifting stories from our communities to the streets of the Hauraki-Coromandel region. We choose to focus on the good and highlight it. Yes, sometimes the actions and attitudes of others can puzzle us. How, in such an advanced world, do we still face a lack of understanding that, although we are all human, we are each unique in what we believe is best for ourselves and our whānau? But fighting those differences only leads to more conflict, so we return to the start: practising universal love.

Coromind celebrates the things that make us feel good while also respecting the environment and our peers. That's why the arts are so important to us – they inspire and make us think. Art can be thought-provoking at times, but if you are at peace with what you believe, it should never offend you. Be open to different opinions and pursue conversations that support finding common ground. And if someone wants to speak louder or show off, love them anyway. It's not always easy, but it is liberating.

Contrary to what some people might think, Coromind doesn't get any funding from government organisations or other financial aid. The magazine exists thanks to the amazing businesses that support us every month, believing in what we do. We're super grateful for you!

You can become a member of our platform and make a positive impact in our community. A small contribution goes a long way. Visit [coromind.nz](http://coromind.nz), click on Become a Member, and we'll salute you.

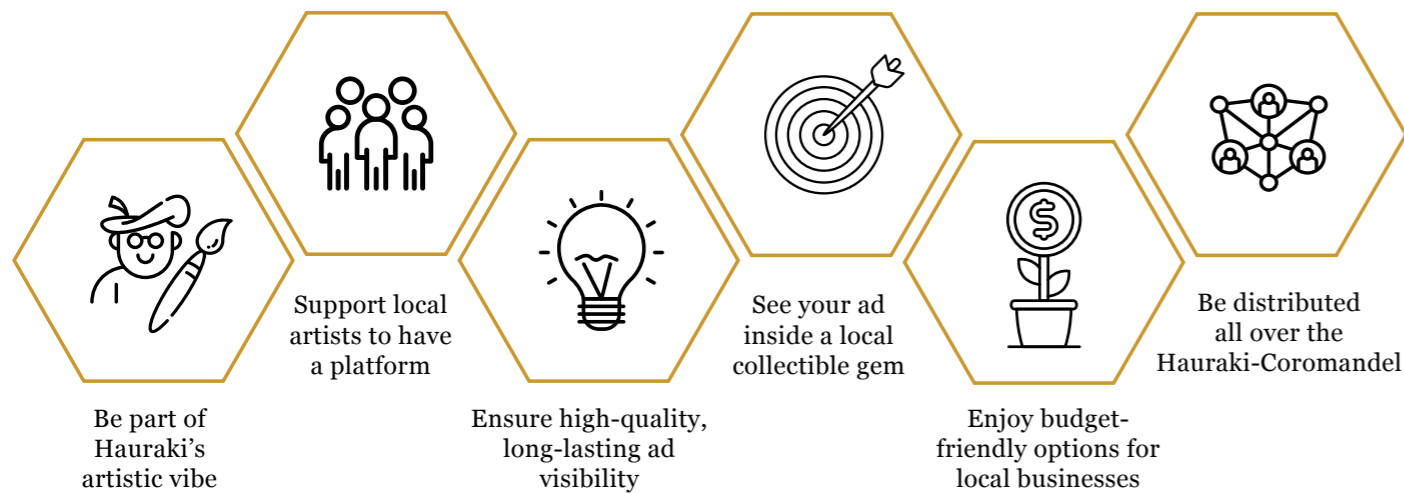
Now go ahead and enjoy what we've put together for you this month.

Peace

The Coromind team



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Get in touch: ✉ [hello@coromind.nz](mailto:hello@coromind.nz)

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# ANNA EVANS

I've been creating art for as long as I can remember. As a child, my favourite activity was drawing. I'd carefully arrange my pens in rainbow order before each session, a reflection of my early obsession with colour. Even in my earliest works – felt pen drawings from the age of four – colour played a central role. I'd cover every inch of the paper, drawing clowns, rainbows, zoo animals, trains – whatever captivated my imagination at the time. That same desire to reflect what fascinates me still drives my creative process today.

Art has always been my way of making sense of the world, of orchestrating it into something I find beautiful. My work isn't a direct reflection of reality, but rather an insight into how I personally am experiencing that which I find beautiful or allegorical at that moment in time.

I'm a nature lover. The intricate veins of leaves, the texture of clouds, the way light interacts with everything – it all captivates me. I'm especially drawn to how light changes the colours of a landscape, how a single tree can shift through countless shades of green over the course of a day, a grassy maunga turning golden as the sun rises and falls.

I first truly noticed the brilliance of light and its effect on colour when I arrived in New Zealand as a new migrant. I had just turned 11 years old, the year was 1994. My favourite book was *Treasure Island* and my favourite movie was *Jurassic Park*. It seems absolutely fitting that I found myself on the shores of the Hauraki Gulf surrounded by magnificent volcanic cones, intense turquoise water, golden sands and magnificent palms. When I

first got off the plane I was instantly struck by the intensity of light. The colours were much more vibrant than the muted grey tones I'd grown up with in northern Manchester.

The first house I lived in, on arriving in Aotearoa, looked across the harbour from Takapuna towards Auckland city. The Sky Tower was still under construction but the view of the harbour and Rangitoto was how I really first came to understand the passing of light on objects ... there's nothing quite like an ever-moving reflective body of water, man-made cuboids and natural occurring volcanic cones to perfectly demonstrate how light affects colour. From these early experiences, my obsessions with light and the natural world only grew.

The experimentation of adolescence and the exploration of early adulthood took me to Elam School of Fine Arts, where I found new ways of seeing and making. On leaving art school and becoming an illustrator, my painting took a tiny bit of a hiatus, but by 2015, I was back at the easel painting up a storm and creating my bird works. Those paintings featured majestic dawns, romantic twilight gradients, cradling native flora and fauna set against some of the Hauraki Gulf's most iconic landmarks.

By 2019, I found life was leading me down a new path, the path to motherhood. I moved to the Far North, and though my intention was to return to the Hibiscus coast, life is what happens when you plan something else, so in April 2020 when the world went into those first Covid lockdowns, I found myself on my parents' land, bringing my child into the world.

Motherhood transformed my world once more. In those early days with a newborn, painting felt impossible, so I turned to drawing and digital art on my iPad. It became a creative lifeline, especially in our tiny home where painting with traditional materials was hard to manage.

The rural beauty of the far north deeply influenced me. I became enchanted by the process of growing food and beautiful flowers from seed. With bubba in the baby wrap, I found a new creative avenue and I spent our earliest days together building beautiful gardens.

As my child has become more independent and their play more focused, I've returned to my brushes and it is gardens that have flowed out. Beautiful light-dappled dream gardens. As I find myself in motherhood, I am also finding myself in these gardens, like my child – we're still growing, will continue to grow and allow that light to catch us and illuminate us in our many varied colours and forms.



THE ONLY CONTRAST IS CHANGE

5/4/24

anna

Words by  
**Anna Evans**



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# NAVIGATING THE SYMPHONY OF UNCERTAINTY

*Your Story, Your Soundtrack*

If I asked you, what song are you? Or, which book are you? This might not make any sense at first sight, agree? But imagine that in the grand orchestra of life, it's easy to find ourselves lost in the cacophony of doubt and comparison. Moments of uncertainty often lead us down a spiral of questioning our worth, our path and our purpose. Yet, it is in these moments of introspection that we must remember – everyone has their own 'book', and everyone has their own 'song'.

Just as every book has its chapters, every individual's life unfolds in a series of unique experiences and lessons. Some chapters are filled with triumph and joy, while others are fraught with challenges and learning curves. It's essential to recognise that no two books are identical. Each person's narrative is a composite of their choices, chances, successes and setbacks. Embracing your 'book' means accepting and valuing your journey, complete with its idiosyncrasies and imperfections.

Similarly, every person's 'song' reflects the rhythm of their existence. Our songs are composed of our thoughts, beliefs, emotions and actions. They can be uplifting, melancholic, passionate or serene. The melody of our life is dynamic, changing with each new experience and insight. In moments of doubt, listening to the internal melody that guides us can provide comfort and direction. It's crucial to remember that our song doesn't have to harmonise with others' to be beautiful or meaningful. Its value lies in its authenticity and personal resonance.

Doubts and uncertainties are integral parts of our lives. They signal transitions, growth and the opportunity for introspection. Instead of succumbing to the fear of the unknown, view these periods as invitations to explore the depths of your 'book' and the nuances of your 'song'. Reflect on your chapters, learn from them and anticipate the ones yet unwritten. Tune into your melody, adjust the notes if necessary and sing along with conviction.

While each of us plays a solo piece, together we form an immense orchestra. The beauty of this collective ensemble lies not in unison but in the diversity of its music and stories. Acknowledging and appreciating the uniqueness of each 'book' and 'song' encourages empathy, understanding, and connection. In recognising our individuality, we find strength in our collective humanity.

So, when doubt clouds your vision, and the music of your soul fades into a whisper, remember that the uncertainty is but a temporary dissonance in the grand composition of your life. Your 'book' is a testament to your resilience and growth. Your 'song' is a reflection of your essence and authenticity. Embrace them. Nurture them. Share them. For in the grand library of existence, your story and your melody add invaluable depth to the tapestry of human experience.

Let's not just exist, but live – authentically, courageously, uniquely. Your 'book' is still being written, and your 'song' is yet to reach its crescendo.

 Words by  
**Dr Abilio Oliveira**





# THE ARTS MATTER

## CREATIVES IN SCHOOLS RESONATES ON THE COROMANDEL

This is my third time writing about Creatives in Schools for Coromind. I have a personal connection to the mahi, but I'm also a fierce advocate for the arts. I believe the arts are a core necessity for people of all backgrounds, for enjoyment, entertainment and wellbeing. Which is why I stand in solidarity with arts advocates who are pushing for the reinstatement of the programme, after the Government announced in June 2024 it will cease funding.

Creatives in Schools (CIS) started in 2019 with a unique take on creative mentoring for tamariki and rangatahi (children and young people). It enables schools and kura kaupapa (primary schools operating under Māori custom) to host a creative professional who delivers a project in collaboration with students, harnessing mentoring and skill sharing as teaching tools. It's a nationwide well-being initiative funded by the Ministry of Education in partnership with the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Creative New Zealand.

For the last three years, Mercury Bay Area School (MBAS) has successfully received CIS grants to host local award-winning music producer Dave Rhodes. Across two school terms each year, Dave guides students through the process of writing and recording a compilation album of original music. He works with the students to refine song arrangements and instrumentation, and then teaches students how to record music to a professional standard. Alongside this are the less tangible but equally important benefits to the students' mental health and well-being, self-confidence, creative thinking skills and sense of purpose and career direction. Through CIS, our rangatahi experience the reality of an arts-based career, learn from a successful industry professional, and grow their creative talent and skills.

The result is three professionally recorded albums of original music that highlight the breadth of emerging musical talent in Mercury Bay. This year's album, MBAS In Resonance, is the largest and most eclectic with 18 tracks ranging from pop, indie and hip hop RnB to rock, punk and heavy metal!

CIS has had a positive ripple effect in the Mercury Bay community, Hauraki rohe (district), and Waikato region. Each album release has been celebrated with a well-attended community event at the Monkey House Lounge & Cabaret, where students can hone

their live performance skills. Local radio stations Coromandel's CFM and Coromandel's More FM have interviewed students and Dave, plus added a selection of the songs to their regular rotation. Creative Waikato interviewed participants for an article on their website and advocated for the programme. All three albums are on major streaming platforms, introducing the emerging artists to a national and global audience.

Solo artist Poppy Carpenter says, "Being involved in these projects has really boosted my inspiration to write songs, and my idea of what a song can become outside of just me and my guitar. I've absolutely loved working with Dave, who has encouraged me to become a better artist and songwriter, as well as showing me how cool song production can be."

MBAS Head of Arts Dave Mulholland has been responsible for securing the grants. As a musician himself, he understands the value of arts mentoring in schools. "When students work on their own music, it allows them to explore their self-expression and opens up opportunities to connect with their whānau, friends, and environment. Students are also earning valuable NCEA credits from their work on the album that will support their university entrance regardless of what they choose to study. CIS provides invaluable positive well-being, vocational, and educational outcomes," he says.

In the last year we have heard our coalition government spread harmful rhetoric about the arts; that they are less important, not a funding priority, that arts and music should be deferred in favour of maths and English. This doesn't sit well with parents who have witnessed the positive transformation of their children thanks to CIS.

Emma Bovaird, mum to River, says, "The confidence, professionalism and knowledge my son gained is priceless and will stay with him. We are deeply saddened that at a time when kids need support to get off their screens, touch grass, and embrace the arts, the government has seen fit to stop funding the programme."

Janine Verner, mum to Ryan, says, "CIS has enriched my son's education and personal growth. Engaging in music production

boosted his confidence and fostered collaboration with peers. The arts has empowered our teenager, enhanced his self esteem and helped him to enjoy school."

Loren Greenfield, dad to Zach, says, "Zach's drumming on the school album this year has sent him down a path of discovery and an excited thirst for learning. The album is a huge source of pride, and the teamwork and collaboration skills he's learned will go on to benefit him not only with music."

Anne-Maree McDougall, mum to Charli and Finn, says, "I was lucky enough to see its impact on two of my children. It was a joy to watch their confidence and skills grow, and to have their mahi immortalised in the albums they made with Dave was such an honour. For some students, arts are not just a nice to have, they are the oil on which their engines run."

**So why take away something that so clearly works?**

Education Minister Erica Stanford says the Ministry of Education suggested CIS be axed because it wasn't delivering intended outcomes, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Arts Minister Paul Goldsmith says that sustainable arts careers start in school, and yet CIS is being defunded. Kiwi filmmaker, Dame Gaylene Preston calls the plan to cut CIS funding 'daft'. Arts educator Kerry Palmer asks why do we have to repeatedly convince decision-makers that the arts have a 'deep and immeasurable value to society'.

Reader, I have two favours to ask.

One. Jump on your fave streaming platform and listen to the three MBAS albums that would otherwise not exist if it weren't for Creatives in Schools.

Two. If you see the inherent value in Creatives in Schools for our rangatahi, our school and our hāpori, please sign the petition (see QR code below). Why? Because the arts matter.



**SIGN UP the Petition**

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Words by **Anusha Bhana**



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## CHILDHOOD ADVENTURES IN THE SWOLLEN RIVER

We were 10, 11, 12 when we rode the eddy-wave. Storms high in the hills had swollen the river into a frothy churn of mocha-brown and bubbling white that surged through the valley, cutting into the high banks with the weight of all that rain.

We made our own craft, the six of us, from poorly-patched inner tubes that left rubbery smudges on our hands, discarded scraps of wood and rusty oil barrels, all held together with string and naive confidence. Only one of us had a vessel intended for the water – Glen's father had let him use the family kayak, with its neon yellow and orange speckled paint down the side.

Where the river met the road, all that heavy water came tumbling over the concrete ford; an unstoppable force met an immovable object, and created an arcing crest, a pulsating bulge in the water, big as a school bus. James's father stood there with arms folded, his mustard Lada parked nearby.

Glen went first. Powering over the wave with strong paddle strokes, he made it look easy, and perhaps it was, when equipped with the right tools and understanding. Bo and Rob went in their makeshift raft. The hands of the river tore wood and string apart like paper, but they came giggling out the other side, clinging to what remained of their creation, like shipwrecked sailors.

I didn't understand the wave until I rode it myself. My brother and I went together, side by side on our tractor tubes. I squealed with mad delight as the river picked up speed, tugging us faster, forward towards that roaring slope. We went over, and the world became a tumbling blur. The brown water slapped me in the face and I went under, thrown about like a sock in the wash. Only luck saved me, or maybe instinct. Whatever you call it, I came back up with my arm wrapped around the inner-tube. My brother was there too, clinging to his tube.

Only then did I learn the possessiveness of the eddy-wave; it did not so easily give up the prizes it caught in its watery grasp. Somehow, it pulled us back, inexplicably dragging us upriver. We were caught in its cycle of churning water. Glen came to the edge of the wave, and held out his paddle for us to grab, tugging us free of the undertow.

I didn't see James go over – I was still shaking off the adrenaline and rubbing the water from my eyes – only heard

my friends' gasps, saw the stiffening of expressions as they stood downstream looking back towards the wave.

I looked where they looked and saw nothing. James wasn't there, just his boogie board, bobbing about like a sponge under the tap.

No one moved. Seconds passed. My heart knew something was wrong. It knocked at my ribcage.

Thump.

Thump.

Like a cork, James shot up, breaching high above the water. He took a deep breath, his face a mask of fear, and was gone again.

I stood looking, my mind blank.

Again James burst from the river, took a breath, then went under.

From the corner of my eye, I saw James's father run to his car. He ripped open the boot and rushed back to the river edge with a coil of rope. He threw it. It uncoiled in the air as James shot up again. He snatched one end, before going under again. The other end fell into my numb hands.

Time stopped.

I stared at the rope, oddly aware of its fibrous texture between my fingers and palm, then dropped it.

I waded towards the wave, as if I was still caught in its backwards pull, its gravity drawing me against the flow. Even as James came past me, dragged out of the wave and into safety by my friends, I felt myself falling towards the wave.

Still now, years later, when I drift to sleep on rainy nights, lying somewhere in that quiet nameless space between dreams, I catch myself falling into the black well of the eddy-wave. And startled awake, confused in the dark, I feel a rope fall into my hands.

Words by  
**Isaac Smith**



# PROUD TO BE LOCAL

## Joe Reynolds

PROUD TO BE LOCAL — SPONSORED BY CFM — IS OUR INSPIRATIONAL FEATURE, HIGHLIGHTING HOME-GROWN COROMANDEL PENINSULA FOLKS DOING WONDERFUL THINGS OUT IN THE WORLD.



### WHAT ARE YOUR FAMILY LINKS WITH WHITIANGA? WHERE ARE YOU LIVING NOW?

*My father still lives there, as well as my stepbrother, sister and nephew. Auckland, for approximately 3-4 years.*

### WHEN WERE YOU LIVING IN MERCURY BAY? YEARS AT MERCURY BAY AREA SCHOOL?

*From three up until I turned 18 (2003-2018). I spent 12 years at Mercury Bay Area School.*

### WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING SINCE SCHOOL?

*I've had a lot of jobs, starting as an electrical apprentice; then I went into roofing/scaffolding. I moved to Hamilton and became a retail manager, as well as being a bouncer at various Hamilton nightclubs. From there, I joined the navy as a seamanship combat specialist during COVID. Because the ships weren't sailing as frequently, I left after about 2.5 years. Then, I trained in MMA for eight months and was meant to have my MMA debut before tearing ligaments in my ankle. So, I decided to get another job, which fell upon me randomly but was a perfect fit; it is my current role as a long-haul flight attendant for Qantas.*

### WHAT WOULD BE THE ACHIEVEMENT YOU ARE MOST PROUD OF?

*Becoming sober, after years and years of binge drinking and fighting in Thailand.*

### HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS NOW?

*My typical day varies, I work as a long-haul flight attendant, so I tend to be all over the world, trying to keep a routine. If I'm not working, I'll most likely be in the gym or over in Thailand fighting muay thai.*

### WHAT ABOUT THE CULTURE DO YOU LIKE THE MOST, WHERE YOU ARE?

*Auckland, I believe, doesn't have too much culture. I prefer Whitianga's culture; however, it's hard to have a job like mine and live in Whitianga.*

### HOW HAS WHITIANGA CHANGED SINCE YOU LAST VISITED?

*The town has grown a lot, with many new holiday homes and people floating about.*

### WHAT ARE YOUR FONDEST MEMORIES OF MERCURY BAY?

*Living a more relaxed lifestyle. Visiting all the beaches and playing rugby/the rugby culture.*

### WHO WERE SOME OF YOUR FRIENDS IN THOSE EARLY YEARS?

*Dane Mathews, Tyrone Campbell, Josh Callesan, Keegan Gunner, Cameron Richards were the main group I used to kick about with.*

### WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO CATCHING UP WITH NEXT TIME YOU ARE HOME?

*It would have to be my little nephew, Hadleigh.*

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUNGER YOU?

*Don't focus on drinking and trying to fit in, follow what you want to do and keep up to date with your fitness, and don't sell any of your bitcoins.*

### BIGGEST LIFE LESSON SO FAR?

*Life's not fair, embrace the good and the bad; if something bad happens to you, tell yourself 'good' and carry on, don't look back.*

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# Poetic Ground

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## Te Puia 2017

Echoes through the ages  
Sweet ring of enchanted places  
Our role – in this flicker of time  
Protect this sacred rohe  
Surf rumbles – familiar sighing  
Aaahhhh...  
Pā resonates mysterious presence  
All who come by here touched by it...  
mauri...wairua  
Today heralds onshore winds  
Change – moon driven tide  
My mokopuna help place precious plants  
I smell smoke from past fires  
I look around – shadow ancestors  
Pause – smiles – soft breath  
Easing out long sigh  
Aaaahhhh...

We plant karamū, harakeke, mānuka,  
kahikatea, pōhutukawa, māhoe,  
kawakawa  
Our hands dry out – skin cracks  
Boots chafe and pinch  
Still we plant – for our children's  
children  
Little time left for everything the planet  
needs done  
I cry out – shadow ancestors turn in  
alarm  
Moving among us – comfort of their  
presence – encouraging – energising  
Again I smell smoke from past fires  
Chanting on the wind  
Then they are gone  
Only the māhi is left.

 Words by  
**Howard Saunders**

## Reflection of the World

It was a zigzagging coastline and a sheer  
deep blue summer is old  
Colourful boats slide over the deep sea  
A few white seagulls on the reef reveal  
the never-ending beauty  
The sea breeze slowly makes everything  
nameless  
The green forest is nameless, the person  
who rides the waves is nameless,  
The boat oars are nameless  
Looking back at the nameless, the world  
is unknown  
There is only a traceless hint that falls  
between the mountains and the sea  
Throw away trivial everyday life  
To love the reflection of the world  
Treat the ordinary as an extraordinary gift

Treat reefs and seagulls as eternity  
Lay the ordinary into the waves  
What's really left behind becomes a part  
of you  
Some things are not lost, but given

 Words by  
**Yaning Ma Foreman**

*Author's comment:*  
*Because of the epidemic and  
accompanying the children, I feel a bit  
overdrawn. When I take the children to  
play at the beach, I suddenly see a very  
beautiful picture. Because of the low  
tide, the beauty is more pure. This is a  
revelation: the world will always give  
people comfort and rewards, as long as  
you have a delicate mind.*



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# ROSS' RAMBLINGS: SAILING STORIES

## Part 2

My French friends, Jacques and Marie and their two young children, who participated in the cricket match mentioned in Part 1, eventually left Aotearoa bound for New Caledonia where they stayed for some months before heading to Fiji. They invited me to join them to sail with them to Vanuatu, so I flew to Nadi and boarded their 40-foot yacht.

On arrival, I felt some tension between Jacques and his wife and later learned that he had had an affair while in New Caledonia and was still not over it. It's hard to be on a boat in a confined space if relationships are not going well, so after the 3-day sail to Vanuatu I decided to leave the French family to their problems and hopped on a rusty old freighter which serviced the outer islands of Vanuatu every month. We stopped at tiny islands, far from other land with small villages home to 50 to 100 people. I could have stopped off at any one of them but finally chose a larger one in the Shepherd Islands group.

There I met the only foreigners on the island, a Scottish couple who were trying to start a small fishing industry under an aid organisation's banner. A small runabout with a 40hp outboard, an ice making machine, a power generator and a shed had been donated, with the idea that the fish caught could be kept on ice and sent to Port Vila, the capital, for sale. This supposedly would have brought a lot more money to the island residents as the island waters were very deep and home to large tuna, wahoo, mahi mahi and marlin a few hundred metres offshore.

It seemed like a good idea but unfortunately the local fishermen lived a subsistence lifestyle, as had their ancestors for thousands of years before them, and they weren't overly enthusiastic about getting up and going fishing at dawn when the fish were at their hungriest. Nor were they used to meeting deadlines and quotas necessary for the enterprise to thrive. So, it was a frustrating time for the Scottish volunteers who were trying their hardest to help the local economy. Perhaps there were different values at play there, regarding lifestyle and motivation. I was not sure at the time whether or not the villagers wanted the fishing enterprise or whether a bureaucrat behind a desk in some foreign country thought that more money would be a good thing for the community. It was an unusual village of a few hundred people with a primary school, and a path dividing it with a church of different denominations on either side. I used to hear strange chants and other primal noises which I assumed to be religious rituals, while daily life in the village was still how I imagine it would have been hundreds of years ago, apart from the corrugated iron roofs, the odd radio and the well-maintained churches. When I returned to Aotearoa I sent a selection of fishing lures that my Scottish friends had requested. I hope the Vanuatu fish enjoyed the taste of NZ plastic.

Eventually *Ruamoko*, my first yacht, the 23 ft Wharram catamaran, became too small for me and the two members of my new family, Kimiko and baby Hanako. So, on a windless summer's day at Wharekaho I took a prospective buyer out for a test sail. The lack of wind put a stop to any meaningful sailing but the pod of dolphins that surrounded us on that day must have impressed my crew and the next day I waved goodbye to that sturdy little craft as it set off for its new home at Puhoi, north of Auckland. I left a thank you note for the dolphins.

As fate would have it, my next sail boat appeared at exactly the same stretch of beach that *Ruamoko* had several years before. The 28 ft trimaran *Jiwa* was pulled up on the sand at Ostend Causeway on Waiheke Island, home to myriad multi-hulls and houseboats. I heard she was for sale and I contacted the owner, who told me there was already a conditional offer on her, but he would let me know if it fell through. He told me that he and his wife practised a form of Indonesian meditation and that *Jiwa* was an Indonesian word that means 'soul' or 'spirit'. He also said that after they had named her, they realised that the letters of *Jiwa* comprised the first 2 letters of their names, Jill and Wayne. Strange how things happen.

Fortunately for me the conditional offer fell through. So, in early 1990 Wayne, Whitianga local Andy Hopping and I sailed *Jiwa* to her new home of Wharekaho and to this day she still lies there in favourable weather, in the shadow of Mount Maungatawhiri with Wharetaewa Pa at the other end of the beach.

I have done hundreds of trips in *Jiwa*, many to the Mercury Islands that lie a few kilometres off our coast. Ahuahu (Great Mercury Island), which some oral histories suggest was the original place of Polynesian settlement in Aotearoa, did, many centuries ago, support a large human population. It is the only island in the group on which you can land, the others having been designated as wildlife reserves. It is a perfect sailing destination, as many of you will know, with sheltered bays on both sides and Huruhi Harbour (Mercury Cove) providing a safe all-weather anchorage. Over recent years, a successful pest eradication programme has facilitated an explosion of the bird population which in turn provides an eloquent dawn and daytime chorus to be enjoyed by the crews of anchored boats. Marine life also thrives in the pristine waters surrounding Ahuahu.

I remember being anchored in Parapara Bay just outside the Cove on January 8th 2021 with my sister Sally and her husband Alan on board. It was a calm sunny day and would have been my dad's 99th birthday had he still been with us. While enjoying our morning coffee we suddenly noticed a fin coming towards us. A single large bottlenose dolphin slowly circled *Jiwa* once, brilliantly visible in the crystal-clear shallows, and then meandered back out to sea. Of course, we all thought of our dad, who had definitely been a human while on earth. He didn't have fins or a tail and his nose was a lot shorter than a dolphin's. But could he have paid us a birthday visit as a cetacean, or was synchronicity just weaving a mysterious pattern once again? I will leave you to ponder that one ...

Words by  
**Ross Liggins**



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*There's a schooner  
in the offing*

*Her topsails shot  
with fire*

*My heart has gone  
aboard her*

*For the islands  
of desire.*

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Hello everyone. Happy November! We are heading straight into one of the busiest times of the year, Christmas is on the horizon and 2025 is just around the corner.

Even if you're not a celebrator of Christmas, this time of year generally gets busy (and silly). We have an increase of public holidays, work parties, school coming to an end for the year – and summer is coming. Days are getting longer, people are getting out and about. It's not surprising that this time is also usually equated with a whole heap more stress.

I don't know about you, but for me it can also be that time of year we kind of just write off. It feels like the end of the year is almost here and if we blink we'll miss it. It's easy to just decide to throw caution to the wind, let go of the habits we've been so diligently working on and resign to starting fresh in the new year. This year I'm choosing to change that narrative. I know how much can change in a week and I'm allowing the magic of possibility into the last weeks of the year. How GOOD can it get? That's the question I'm going to keep asking myself.

Do you know what is super important through all of this? Making sure you are supporting yourself properly. If I'm not looking after me + myself then the stress and the busyness of this season is going to get on top of me and instead of making the most of the long days I'll be holed up in my blanket fort, feeling like I'm drowning. Can you relate? With all of that being said, I want to offer three really supportive ways to stay on top of the stress.

1. EAT SMART

When you break your fast, whether that is at breakfast time or later in the day – make sure your meal is HIGH PROTEIN. Honestly, if you do this one thing it will change your life. (\*Also side note – that doesn't mean carbs are bad here. They're so important.) So boil eggs for the top of your Vogels, have a protein shake. Right now I'm starting the day with yogurt with blueberries, banana and almonds in a big cup; then in another dish I have two boiled eggs. This action teaches your hormones, which control your blood sugar levels, what they should be expecting for the day. It directly impacts the type of foods you will crave for the day and also how your body will respond to them and it sets up your energy levels for the day.

2. GET OUTSIDE

Take a walk around the block and get fresh air in your lungs. Bonus points if you can do this in the early light and get those rays in your eyes – but any time you can get outside is magic. If you are super stressed, get your BARE feet on the grass. Feel the ground beneath your feet. Exhale.

3. DANCE. TRUST ME.

This one action can revolutionise your day. Pick your favourite song, turn it up loud and get your freak on. You can thank me later ;)

BONUS: Kindness. This time of year can bring up all sorts of feelings; there is added stress and pressure and while some people are embracing it, for some it can be really tough. So I'd like to offer this one for the collective. Be Kind. Kindness is free, and the cliché that we don't know what another is going through is absolutely true. We can plaster on a fake smile and with social media these days you have to be cautious you're not falling into the traps of a highlight reel. It's easy to look around and think everyone is having the greatest time and sometimes it's just not so. Kindness goes so far and it costs nothing.



And that's it for me this time. I hope you have the most magical month, that it's filled with kindness and that you keep asking yourself, how good can it get?

I'd love to know your top tips for surviving this season. Let me know. You can find me over on Instagram, @lifeaskaitlyn, or check out my website www.lifeaskaitlyn.com

Words by  
Kaitlyn Gooch





# SWINGING THROUGH WHITIANGA'S HISTORY

## The Mercury Bay Big Band Chronicles



Once upon a time, the great Polynesian explorer Kupe paid a visit to our region, followed a few centuries later by Captain James Cook. Later, the small seaside township of Whitianga became renowned for its kauri sawmilling, and laid out the permanent settlement of the town. A large brass band was started in 1909 by the local barber, rehearsing in the drill hall – probably Whitianga's first 'big band'. By 1929, the famous American author of westerns, Zane Grey, made the area his playground for big-game fishing, which again put Mercury Bay in the limelight. Winning the America's Cup in 1988 (briefly) was another world-famous event, with the clubhouse for the Mercury Bay Boating Club being a 1955 Ford Zephyr! So we're not just a sleepy seaside town. But wait, there's more ...

Skip a few years to 2014, when a local music teacher and talented flautist and saxophonist, Helen Lee, got together with some local musicians, including two very talented students from Mercury Bay Area School, early in the year, with the intention of forming a Big Band to play Big Band music. Word spread, and soon there were several accomplished musos playing the few charts that were available. Very soon there were approximately sixteen players, some coming from as far away as Thames, Tairua and Matarangi. By September, concerts were performed, first at On Fire restaurant, now Kufe on the Esplanade and the Mercury Bay Club. More music was sourced from the late Rodger Fox, a world famous trombonist, based in Wellington. Rodger also came up to take several great workshops over the following years, with concerts in C3 church, where the group was now rehearsing – what a great venue that was. Audiences enthusiastically enjoyed what they heard. Barbara Bradley became the standard MC/comper, the audience hanging on every word as she introduced each number.



The band had now the benefits of a music librarian, Roger Simpson, who had all our music electronically stored ready for reference when needed. The Mercury Bay Community Choir had two concerts combined with the band for 'tea dances' in the town hall as well which were well attended and well received. More concerts enthralled appreciative audiences, including: A Taste Of Matarangi, supporting The Lions and the Sea Scouts, a town music festival, a performance in Thames at St George's church, and more Rodger Fox concerts – all very memorable occasions for the players as well as the audiences.

Late in 2019 the band played in the Tuia 250 celebrations, commemorating the first onshore encounters between Māori and Pākehā. For this special event, two of our members – Yvette Audain and Paul Lee – were commissioned to compose special music for the occasion, which they did very well, and the band excelled in the performance of these two outstanding compositions. Sadly after that, our wonderful Helen became seriously ill and had to leave the band, so musical directing was ably taken over by Paul Lee.

'Lest We Forget', the ANZAC concert in the town hall on ANZAC Day 2021, with guest conductor Alistair McMillan from Waihi, and featuring Jenny Jackman as Vera Lynn, was a tremendous success, with the hall decked out in suitable bunting, and absolutely packed with an audience eagerly awaiting the great sounds of those years gone by – they were not disappointed. It was an honour and privilege to be part of this wonderful concert.

Covid lockdowns took their toll on rehearsals. To encourage more young players, a scholarship was offered to school students, and was won by Kenjia Campbell, who accepted the scholarship, and has continued to play with us. As often happens, our two foundation students have moved on to university studies. Cyclone Gabrielle cutting SH25A early in 2023 made it too difficult for our Thames players to rehearse with us, and with its fewer members, the band had to look at becoming less instrument-dependent; vocalist Abby Lawrence ably joined to help broaden the repertoire. SH25A has re-opened, but our away musos have gone in other musical directions, unfortunately for us.

And that's where we are now, a smaller combo group of nine players playing not-so-big-bandish but very danceable and well-known music. An offshoot of the Big Band was the formation of the Whitianga Dixieland Band who also rehearse regularly. The Dixie group is led by Kevin Robinson, who is lead trumpeter in the MBBB.

If you are a competent musician with your own instrument and can read charts, or know of someone fitting that description, who would like to join our little Big Band, you/they would be most welcome. For further enquiries – please phone Paul Lee on 027 811 9211. He, and we, would really love to hear from you. Come and have a blow.

If you're interested in booking the band for a party or event, please reach out to Jani at soulsax@xtra.co.nz or call 027 811 9211.

Words by  
**Paul Bradley**  
Bass guitarist with MBBB



### Top Left Picture

Top: Paul Lee - alto sax, Trevor Hildreth - trombone, Rob Perks - drums, Jani Dennis - keyboards, Paul Bradley - bass, Bong Cureg - guitar

Bottom: Kenjia Campbell - tenor sax and Roger Simpson - librarian

Absent: Kevin Robinson - Trumpet, Michelle Lidgard - clarinet, Abby Lawrence - vocal



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# Celebrating Conservation in our Communities

## Local conservation volunteers are dedicated to protecting and restoring nature.

From Moehau at the tip of the Coromandel Peninsula to Te Aroha in the south, diverse ecosystems are home to a wide variety of wildlife, including many native, threatened and at-risk species.

Our rohe (area) is also home to a vibrant network of conservation groups, many collaborating with tangata whenua (Māori) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) to protect the natural environment so our taonga (treasure) species can thrive.

Comprised of community volunteers, iwi/hapū (local tribal groups) and private landowners, local conservation groups contribute thousands of volunteer hours each year. Volunteers are suppressing predators, undertaking weed control, restoring native plants in areas of the bush, wetlands and coast – and so much more.

While the Department administers 38% of the total land area on the Coromandel Peninsula, DOC staff have identified high biodiversity areas where work takes priority. This includes Kopuatai Peat Dome, Pūkorokoro/Miranda, Ōpoutere sandspit, Otahu Ecological Area, Moehau, Papakai and nine predator free islands. Outside of these areas, dedicated community groups lead conservation efforts.

DOC Community Rangers Shania Hills (Hauraki) and Cheyenne Walmsley (Coromandel) say conservation is a team effort.

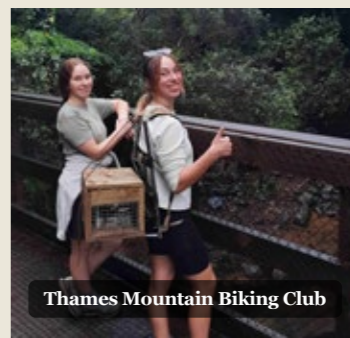
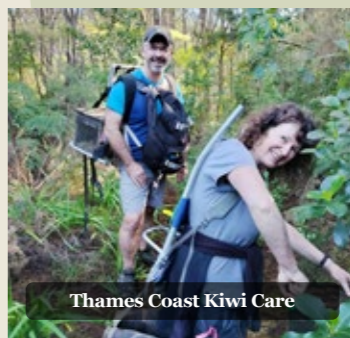
“DOC has a key role in protecting the ecosystems and species that make Aotearoa New Zealand unique. We couldn’t do this without the support of conservation groups, iwi and other organisations. All our actions contribute to protecting and restoring nature,” says Shania.

“Coromandel brown kiwi populations are flourishing. Rare species including Coromandel striped gecko, Archey’s and Hochstetter’s frog and unique ecosystems are getting protection, thanks to the dedicated pest control efforts from local conservation groups,” says Cheyenne.

We’d like to extend our gratitude to our communities and iwi/hapū for their ongoing dedication to protecting our native wildlife and their habitats. The progress of conservation in Hauraki-Coromandel is due to the support and contribution of many – some of them pictured on this page. Read the online article for more photos and details of our local conservation groups.

## How you can get involved in local conservation

- Learn more about predator control – predatorfreenz.org
- Donate a trap to a conservation group – giveatrap.org.nz
- Join a conservation group – volunteer your time or skills



# The DOG Whisperers who saved Tess

## A dog's fight against cancer

Johanna and I agonised over the decision to book our overseas trip in July because we were so worried about Tess. Thanks to Dave, our vet, Tess, our beloved Border Collie, is still with us despite being diagnosed with liver cancer. He had prescribed prednisone, a steroid, to control her cancer. It was working, and she was eating, albeit reluctantly. We visited Dave again, and he used an ultrasound to check if the cancer was still there. His diagnosis confirmed that it remained present.

The key to finally agreeing to go on our trip was meeting Kim and Pete Donaldson, who live at the bottom of our street. They had started house-sitting and pet-sitting

and came highly recommended by close friends. However, Tess's condition seemed to worsen by the day, and she appeared frail, nearly skin and bone.

In Kim's words, they decided, "No Auschwitz dog for us." They were on a mission and, with intuition guiding them, they tried a range of feeding options.

Tess had never been very interested in food and was wary of new things, but they persisted, offering her all manner of natural treats, including beef jerky, venison with gravy, liver cookies, and more – making a game of it all. To our delight, they even sent pics of her at Wharekaho – her top beach. It gave us peace of mind.

A natural diet for dogs in the wild includes offal. Offal provides dogs with essential nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and high-quality protein, supporting their heart, immune, and digestive health. It also promotes healthy skin, a shiny coat, and improved energy levels.

Tess shows all these benefits – it's not rocket science. She continues on her stable diet of chicken, as we know that moderation is key to avoiding nutrient deficiencies. Her cancer symptoms are no longer evident, but regular visits to Dave will remain essential to monitor her progress.

In the process, Kim and Pete even managed to wean her off prednisone. Though prednisone was a great short-term treatment, long-term use can lead to serious side effects. As Dr David Boothe and other experts have noted, these can include increased thirst, weight gain, muscle

wasting, a heightened risk of infections, gastrointestinal issues, skin problems, diabetes, and delayed wound healing.

Interestingly, when orcas hunt whales, they often target the most nutrient-rich parts, such as the liver and internal organs. These are energy-dense and vital to their survival. Similarly, after making a kill, lions consume internal organs like the liver, heart, kidneys and lungs first.

These organs are rich in essential nutrients, including proteins, vitamins, and fats, which are necessary for energy and health. Carnivores prioritise organs for their high nutritional content, followed by muscle and fat-rich areas – a strategy that ensures maximum caloric intake, especially when competition or limited time near the kill restricts their feeding.

Speaking of natural diets, Paul is on a mission to provide a program for kids with dyslexia. He has pioneered a way to mimic how our brains are naturally wired through storytelling. WordSmart systematically reveals students' passions and helps them use their unique gifts to develop a positive mindset. Unlike other methods that have failed, WordSmart is making real progress.

Natural diets work best for both kids and dogs!

Words by  
**Paul Blackman**



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Elizabeth: 022 350 3043

Amir's Bag Of Marbles:

# THE DARK ARTS

Julia Brown, Adolfo Constanzo, Ronald Eric Salazar, Frantz Bordes, Valdano Riche, Mose H. Martin. Undoubtedly, these names are unlikely to ring a bell for anyone, which is unsurprising as they are not notably famous or important. Originating from different places and periods, what connects them is that they all either practised the Dark Arts or claimed that they had been cursed in some way to either suffer or cause someone to suffer or even die. Falling outside the scope of organised religion and science, Occultism suggests involving a 'hidden' or 'secret' power, such as magic and mysticism, breaking natural rules and relying on malefic powers. Commonly known as Voodoo, Witchcraft or Black Magic, their intended use is to cause harm, but in some cases, even helpful magic was attributed to demons. Another term that encapsulates them all is the Dark Arts. Let's explore some of them then.

## VOODOO

Originating primarily in West Africa, Voodoo combines the elements of two religious belief systems: Catholicism and West African Vodun. Ancestral spirits and devotional practices are inherited from parents and grandparents and comprise many spirits, both those of the unseen world and living humans. Variations of the religion spread throughout the world as a result of the slave trade to Cuba, Spain, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, America and predominantly Haiti, where it is known as Voodoo.

## WITCHCRAFT

Early witches were defined as those who practised Witchcraft using magic spells and calling upon spirits for help or to bring about change. An often misunderstood choice of profession, witches were usually thought to be doing the Devil's work; however, most were natural healers or so-called 'wise women' who roamed the forests alone, collecting herbs or talking to animals. Widows, single women and women on the margins of society were targeted during witch hunts, most of whom were executed by hanging or burned at the stake. These days, a witch hunt is more likely related to a campaign directed against a person or group considered to be a threat to society for having unorthodox views.

## BLACK MAGIC

Traditionally, using magic or supernatural powers for evil and selfish purposes was referred to as Black Magic. It was commonly

reserved for those hexing or cursing their neighbours, invoking demons and other evil spirits to destroy crops, and also included those capable of leaving their earthly bodies, usually to engage in devil worship. People who practise Black Magic or seek the help of professional black magicians seem to have one goal in mind: to harm others. This includes, but is not limited to, making people sick, depriving them of living peaceful lives or even using their souls to harm others. Carlos Santana's famous single 'Black Magic Woman' sings it nicely:

"I've got a black magic woman  
Got me so blind, I can't see  
That she's a black magic woman  
She's trying to make a devil outta me"

## DARK ART

Critical art or protest art is also referred to as Dark Art. It is used to provoke controversy and dispute and to spread a message to the public declaring criticism or a complaint. Macabre scenes make us stop and think about ourselves in an attempt to better understand a side of human nature we thought was forgotten. Rooted in the legacy of artists such as Francisco Goya, H.R Giger and Salvador Dali, throughout history we find famous artists who wanted to show and share the darkest and most terrifying side of their experiences. The macabre works to emphasise the details and symbols of death, particularly gruesome in nature, as a reminder of the fragility of our lives.

But for those who would rather not delve too deep into this matter, I suggest you sit back with some unhealthy snacks, switch on your television and stream films about wizardry or binge on Harry Potter movies. After all, life is just too short to be dark.



Words by  
**Amir Yussof**



# White Wind

## The Visionary Art of Elizabeth Kyle

A leap across 'the ditch' in 1991 catapulted New Zealander Elizabeth Kyle into an unexpected life as a highly regarded Visionary Surrealist / Mystical Symbolist artist and gallery owner in Australia.

Elizabeth's journey began in Katikati where she showed early signs of artistic flair. Her forward-thinking parents allowed her to study at Tauranga Girls' College under the tutelage of the legendary Claudia Jarman.

Elizabeth's astounding talent has been recognised with many prizes and accolades, beginning in 1968 with 1st place in the New Zealand Chamber Music Program Cover Design Award. Underpinning her visionary paintings, Elizabeth's impeccable design aesthetic shines through in her large-scale mural commissions: 1974's *Birth of a City* and, in 1981, *The Tauranga Centennial Mural* – both for Tauranga City Council; also *Mt Wellington* for the Fisher and Paykel boardroom, Auckland.

A Diploma of Fine Arts (1972) from Elam Art School in Auckland, majoring in Painting and Industrial Design, was proof to Elizabeth of her father's dictum, "If you can think of something – you can make it"; her ease with a variety of materials ranging from clay to fibreglass, from 3D constructions to oil and acrylic paintings and paper sculptures, bears witness to this versatility.

The advice of Garth Tapper, one of her painting lecturers, "Do NOT paint spirals! You cannot do anything with spirals", went unheeded as Elizabeth's style cried out for the inclusion of koru. When she met Master Carver Tuti Tukaokao, he was so impressed with the young artist's 1973 five-metre-long triptych, *Ngahere Wairua (Bush Spirit)*, owned by Tauranga City Council, that the respected carver personally instructed Elizabeth in the sacred meanings of wood carving and tukutuku, and blessed her with permission to use Māori symbols in her work.

In 1985 Elizabeth met, and later married, (the late) John Kyle; however, people in New Zealand may remember her by her maiden name of Elizabeth Grainger. John was an inspirational partner who shared her passion and love for all things mediaeval.

Her two children, Nicholas and Benjamin, are featured in many of her paintings, most notably *Dream Weaver*, created for the cover of *Dream Weaver*, a short story collection by Australian writers. For this striking image, Elizabeth won Best Australian Cover Artist, Science Fiction Section, at the 1998 Ditmar Awards.

In 1975, Elizabeth represented New Zealand at the Queensland Art Festival Exhibition in Myer's Gallery, Brisbane. She was often known as 'The Mother of Visionary Art in Australia' and her reputation continued to blossom for another 25 years. Elizabeth exhibited in a variety of venues, including her own privately-run galleries in Olinda, Victoria, in Surfer's Paradise, and Elizabeth Kyle's Castle Gallery in Tugun, Queensland. She combined her love of mediaeval times and regalia with appearances and exhibitions and her fascination with 'times of yore' can be seen in the many finely detailed images of high-born ladies and chivalrous knights of the realm which grace Elizabeth's work.

Spirituality, epitomised by her signature work *White Wind – Messenger of Love*, underpins much of Elizabeth's work and encompasses her empathy for the spiritual aspect of our lives that is often ignored by the mainstream.

Elizabeth has successfully exhibited in Paris and Singapore, where her paintings tap into universally shared values and experiences; her exquisite *Sparrowfall* was chosen as the poster for an Art UNESCO exhibition of memorable world-wide posters at the Grand Palais, III Salon Internationale de L'affiche. Elizabeth's strong spiritual awareness is also manifest in her affinity with and understanding of Māori lore and iconology. Her approach to the use of these motifs is underpinned by a deep gratitude and respect, enhanced by the teachings of kaumatua such as Tuti Tukaokao.

Elizabeth returned to Aotearoa in 2016 and began a search for a permanent gallery space in her beloved homeland. Elizabeth's partner, Ron Harvey, explains the journey taken by them to turn this vision into a reality:



"Soon after Elizabeth and I met, we began searching for the ideal gallery space on the North Island where she could establish a permanent exhibition. Our quest took us to Tirau's Castle Pamela which was unobtainable, so we continued our search.

"In 2023, we mounted an exhibition at the Waihi Museum and a lateral-thinking Waihi land agent suggested we take a look at Thames Old Court House, a heritage-listed building. As soon as we entered this lovely place we felt it was meant to be: a gracious building with a beautiful interior, a helpful and supportive local council, a prime position on Highway 25, and part of the Golden Triangle of Auckland-Hamilton-Tauranga.

"We have spent the past six months painting and re-organising the space, hanging Elizabeth's paintings and 3D works to their best advantage, and getting to know our helpful local community."

Elizabeth adds, "This town has been so welcoming, and the people are just gorgeous. We love Thames.

"My original paintings are not for sale; however, we have a selection of cards and prints of my works available for purchase at the gallery shop. We are open by invitation and you can come alone or book for a group. I am happy to give tours of the exhibition and to share the stories behind the paintings. Phone us on 027 955 0246 or find us on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/queen.elizabeth.kyle>

"As we are an unfunded gallery we do have a \$5 koha for admission, which includes a complimentary greeting card featuring one of my major paintings. We very much look forward to welcoming you to the Elizabeth Kyle Gallery."

 Words by  
**Pixi Robertson**



# A JOURNEY OF MANY STEPS:

*Small Actions Big Change*



Imagine a future where our beaches are pristine, our community is thriving, and businesses, nature, and people live in harmony. This future might seem distant, but every small action brings it closer.

## The Issue: Single-Use Culture

In our town alone, a quarter of a million single-use coffee cups are discarded each summer. They may seem like minor conveniences, but the impact is enormous—contributing to landfill waste, environmental degradation, and a culture of disposability.

## How We Got Here: Convenience at a Cost

Single-use items became part of daily life through convenience. But this habit comes with a cost: not only are valuable resources wasted, but the environment we cherish suffers. What began as harmless efficiency has turned into a growing waste problem. This convenience comes at a direct cost, to you too - either as an extra charge for using throwaways or lost opportunity of a discount if you BYO reusable. Throwaway costs everyone more.

## The Reuse Revolution: Turning the Tide

Change starts with something as simple as a cup. By choosing reusable cups or enjoying coffee in the café, we do more than reduce waste. We support local cafes, protect our environment for future generations, and enhance our town's reputation as a green, sustainable community that draws in visitors seeking nature and responsible tourism.

## What You Can Do

Each time you use a reusable cup, you're taking part in the Reuse Revolution. It's a small step, but one that helps create a cleaner, greener future. So, next time you visit a local café, bring your own cup or stay a while and enjoy the moment. Together, our small actions create big change.

Words by **Tracey Bell** - Chair Wāhi Tukurua



## How Experience Shapes Your Thoughts and Belief

What would you say if I told you that there is a record of everything you have ever done, said, seen, heard, felt, tasted, smelt, even thought? Well, there is. It is called your subconscious mind. It takes in and records *everything*.

That seems impossible doesn't it? But an episode of 'America's Got Talent' I saw pretty much proves my point. A man walks out on stage in front of the Zoom audience (floor to ceiling computer screens lining the huge studio) and the 'live' judges. He is introduced as Max Major, a mentalist.

Cue Max's pre-recorded background package which begins with him re-enacting his time as a bartender during his college days. Telling us how much he learnt about human nature as the 'fly on the wall' bartender. "What we see affects how we think, and if we can become skilled at controlling *how* people see things, then we can start to play with their mind." Okay. He must have been a *very* observant bartender! He then meets some friends at a cafe, wanders quaint streets, all the while his voiceover tells the journey that got him to the American Idol stage. So far, very standard.

Back in the studio he tells the audience that he is going to try "to get inside their minds, through their computer screens". He then asks them to hold up the blank sheets of paper and the pen they were asked to have ready. Which they dutifully do. He then proceeds to ask them to close their eyes and lets them know he is going to ask them to draw a picture, adding that it can be of absolutely *anything* that they choose. It's totally up to *them*. At the instructed time, the audience sets about drawing the image of *their choosing* onto the paper in front of them. He asks that they don't show the camera what they have drawn until the end of the allotted time. The moment arrives, he instructs everyone to hold up their drawings for the world to see, and there, in front of our eyes, seemingly without exception are hundreds of pictures of ... the sun.

Every. Single. One. Is a sun!

How is this possible? Well Max himself kindly cracks the code for us, pointing out that in his background package that was run for everyone to watch, there were 6 subliminal (existing or functioning below the threshold of consciousness – picked up only by our lightning fast subconscious) images of the sun.

A sun-like symbol as a coaster in the bar, a sun as part of the logo on the bar door, outside he passes a poster advertising 'Sunny California', a street blackboard has a sun at the top, sun, sun, sun, you get the picture.

Um, isn't this column about love and relationships? Yes, it is. Now, imagine the subconscious programmes we all run about love and relationships? What your parents told you (and showed you), what TV programmes told you, friends, movies, books, and your own life experiences. And how we play those unconscious programmes out.

It really pays to examine your thoughts and beliefs in this area. Pay attention to your actions and especially, your *reactions*. Reactions are mostly unconscious, trying to keep you safe, but although our unconscious stores a massive amount of data, it's not always that smart or great with context. The good news is, sometimes just the examination is enough to melt the belief.

Usually it takes a wee bit more work, but that beautiful brain of yours is infinitely malleable, so give it a go. Free your mind, it's the first step to unlocking your Couple Power.

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Words by **Lana Garland**

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# Hauraki-Coromandel Tracks and Trails



Kia ora. My name is Connor de Gier, and this is my story. I was born in Auckland and lived there until moving to the Coromandel in 2021. I am 17 years old and have now developed a love for nature and exploring anywhere my legs can take me. I only just started hiking and adventuring this year.

I got into exploring and hiking by starting with little side quests, just little weekend missions to find a new or existing place to chill and hang out with my mates. I quickly got attached to the perfection nature provides. Whether exploring on or off tracks, my appreciation for everything expands. When I'm out exploring, I mentally feel happier, healthier and incredibly accomplished afterwards. The self-accomplishment and my appreciation for nature is a huge reason why I do the things I do.

With a background in social media, making videos about nature is also what I like doing in my spare time. I enjoy inspiring people to get out and enjoy the views just as much as I do. I make videos and take photos for TikTok and Instagram. These platforms allow me to post my content and share my experiences with an audience. Inspiring people to start appreciating nature more makes me feel really good about myself, so it gives me another purpose to get out there and go. I truly believe that everyone should go out and enjoy what's been gifted to us.



hike, so I was more than just excited. As we climbed, nature truly showed its beauty, from the lush greenery of the trees creating a canopy over our heads to the other vibrant colours adding to the kaleidoscope of beauty. Along the way, there were many lookouts that were truly breathtaking. It was impossible not to stop and admire the views.

As Neils and I got three-fourths of the way to the summit, we decided to start running as we wanted to reach the summit to have enough time up there to enjoy it, and enough time to reach the bottom before it was dark. The closer I got to the summit, the more excited I was, knowing I would achieve my goal and see the spectacular view. Going past Pinnacles Summit Hut, the views kept getting better and better. This gave me a good sense of accomplishment even though I had not reached the top yet.

Finally, after about three hours of hard hiking, we reached the summit. The thrill I felt as we reached the summit is unexplainable. Lots of mixed emotions were running through my head at the top but all good emotions. I never thought that nature would give me such a high sense of self-accomplishment. Standing at the top gazing over the view, I felt like Da Man; I felt as if I had climbed Mt Everest, although I hadn't. I remember feeling immensely fulfilled as if all the hard work and effort had finally paid off. I felt a deep sense of pride knowing I had achieved something significant. It was also a feeling of contentment and satisfaction, knowing I had reached my goal. Overall, I felt empowered and highly motivated to continue to strive for even greater accomplishments.

Not only did my achievement feel spectacular but the view from the summit was truly breathtaking, from every angle. It was incredible to be able to see so far into the distance, I felt as if I was dreaming. There are many photos and videos online to back up what I'm saying.

Words by  
**Connor de Gier**



## Tips:

- Plan your day appropriately and make sure all your timing is good.
- Make sure to bring plenty of water.
- Nuts and muesli bars are a really easy and nutritious way to fuel yourself when hiking.
- Prepare to climb when approaching the summit. Easy climb with ladders and bars.
- Prepare for temperatures to get much colder at the top.
- Recommended: take a head torch just in case.
- Billygoat Track offers more views and is more scenic than the Webb Creek Track, however it takes an hour more.

## KAUAERANGA KAURI TRAIL Pinnacles Walk

The Pinnacles Summit is located in Thames Coromandel with stunning views throughout the whole track. The Kauaeranga Kauri Trail (Pinnacles Walk) is a 6-8 hour return hike, but definitely worth it. The sense of accomplishment as I finally reached the summit was an unexplainable feeling I hadn't felt before. The day I climbed the Pinnacles Summit, I woke up and had a strong gut feeling that I should do it. I had been wanting to do the Pinnacles Walk since moving to Whitianga. The day was pretty unplanned; after doing some jobs, I called a mate. Neils was keen, so I picked him up. We underestimated the time it took to get from Whitianga to Thames but then, having reached the start of the Billygoat Track, we set off for the summit. Throughout the whole walk, we couldn't stop thinking of how good the feeling would be once we reached the summit. This was my first proper



**Area:**  
Coromandel Forest Park  
**Distance:**  
I chose to do the Billygoat Track, Up & Down: **28 kms (Return)**  
**Grade:**  
**Intermediate- Difficult**  
**Access:**  
From Kauaeranga Road end (unsealed road)

Learn more about this track or watch Connor's summit adventure:



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| CONSERVATION | TRACELESS | BUSYNESS | TRUST  |
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| POLYNESIAN   | PRACTICE  | ROUTINE  | PUNK   |
| TROMBONIST   | VOLCANIC  | PROTEIN  | NUMB   |
| DEVOTIONAL   | HIBISCUS  | OUTSIDE  |        |
| SUBLIMINAL   | SYMPHONY  | NATURE   |        |

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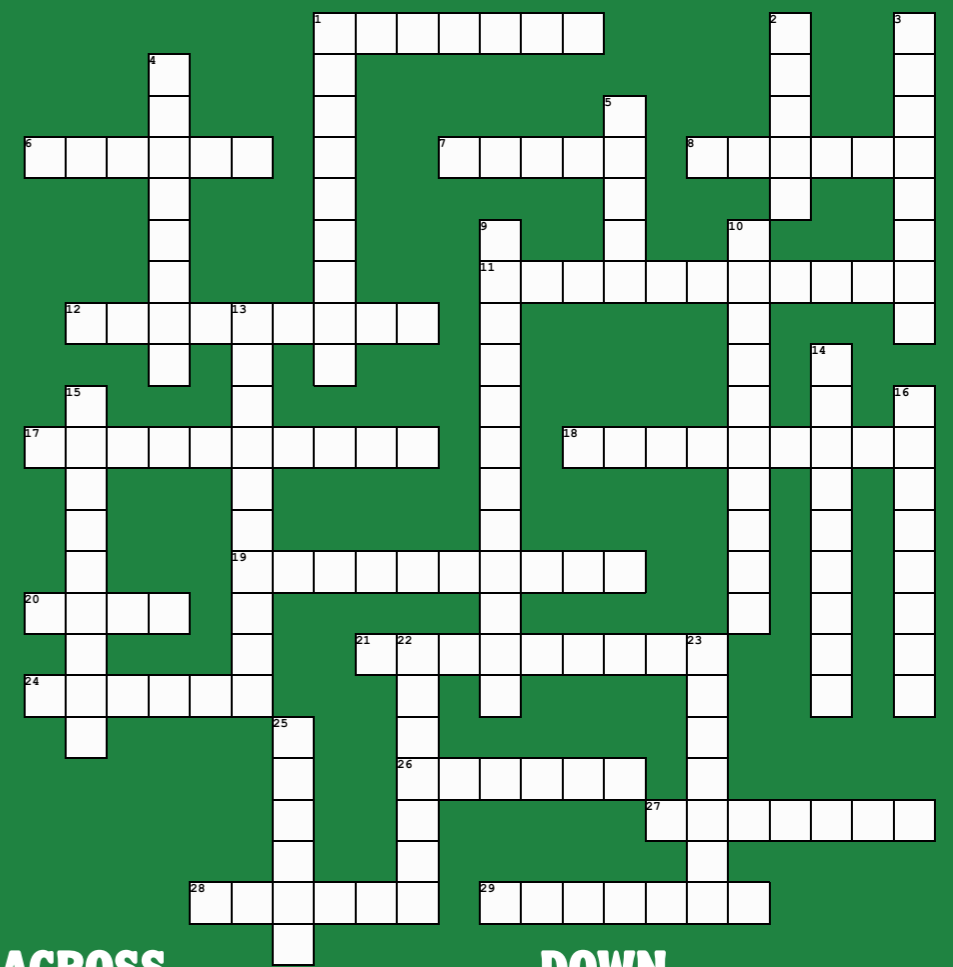


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**ACROSS**

1. A route or track to follow
6. On the other side; farther away
7. Mythical multi-headed serpent
8. Strong-smelling herb used in cooking
11. Acknowledgment for achievements
12. Skills needed for wilderness survival
17. Sympathy and concern for others
18. The process of nourishing the body
19. What others think of you
20. A genre of music known for improvisation
21. Holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus
24. In need of food
26. Elegant, classical form of dance
27. Bringing something back into use
28. The main meal of the evening
29. Extreme happiness or pleasure

**DOWN**

1. Never-ending or continuous
2. Severe weather with wind and rain
3. Birds or people gathering in large groups
4. Display or exhibit something special
5. Largest lake in New Zealand
9. Famous monster created in a lab
10. Overly simple; lacking detail
13. Secret plan by a group, often unlawful
14. People held in confinement
15. Someone you work with
16. Close personal relationship
22. A sheltered place for ships
23. Eight-legged creatures, often feared
25. Season of new growth and blooming

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# LET'S SING THE BLUES

## When big stars light up our small town

Last December, Luke Steele invited me to play the drums with him and his father, Rick Steele, at a pre-Christmas gig. Despite my initial concerns about not having at least one rehearsal, Luke assured me we'd be fine. These guys are top musicians, so I trusted their judgment. Rick Steele is a legendary Bluesman, inducted into the West Australia Music Hall Of Fame in 2016, and his son, Luke Steele, is an eight-time award-winning singer-songwriter, lead vocalist, guitarist and one of the producers of the electro-pop duo, Empire Of The Sun.

The venue was packed, and our two performances were electric. Cruz Steele, Sunny Steele, Jodi Steele, Liz Steele and friends Pippa Le Lievre, Alan and Julia Rhodes, and Stu Pedley all contributed to two memorable nights. Rick has a monthly column in the *Have a Go News* in Australia. I asked him if Coromind could publish the article where he captured the magic of the event. I received a warm "Go for it". So here it is. Big thanks to the Steele whānau!

"There was movement at the station cause the word had got around." Apologies but no writer's royalties to Banjo Patterson. It felt a little like that when I performed at the Monkey House, situated in a small coastal town in New Zealand Aotearoa – translated as 'the land of the long white cloud'.

In my opening remarks, I stated that I was a Kiwi who had been living in Australia a long time, but was very happy to be home in the

'Land of the wrong white crowd'. There is quite an argument going on over there about changing place, street and town names from English to Māori.

My predominantly white audience laughed and the show commenced. I was slightly apprehensive. The support acts had featured my granddaughter solo, and my grandson, with his father, warming the capacity crowd into monumental expectations of the main act ... moi!

Luckily I got off to a good start, and after a couple of songs including, 'She was a big boutique beer drinking woman', I called super-guitar-playing son on stage with a drummer from Brazil, Leo (who I'd only met at sound check), and we were off. Much merriment, mirth, rock 'n roll and dancing ensued, and so say all of us.

From what I have been told, this wonderful little theatre/club, with a capacity of a hundred and fifty, was originally a factory for processing fish. Molly, and Kaspur from New York, were sidelined during the pandemic and a niche idea was created. About six months ago, my son discovered the place and with his wife began frequenting the 'Open Mike' nights which led to a weeklong songwriters' 'Fest' in the school holidays for young performers of the local district school. Because of the location, this school caters for all grades from four year olds to seventeen.

Paul Kelly wrote the song, but was it an indigenous concept? "From little things, big things grow." It just goes to show, plant the seed, water and take care and watch it grow. My mother used to say children are like little plants that have to be nurtured and cared for. I agree. Our night was so successful, we are planning another before I leave and I am excited.

I've been invited to do an interview on local radio (PS: Seniors, it's not called the wireless anymore) and I might even make the local press. Meantime, I'm being forced into walks along the beach followed by a cleansing ale at Grace O'Malley's eating and drinking Emporium.

A man walks into the deed poll office and addresses the young lady.

"I would like to change my name."  
"Yes sir, please state your current name, and that which you would like to change it to.

Then we fill in the paperwork."  
"Yes ma'am, my name at present is: "George Stickypants!"

She nearly collapsed in suppressing her laughter ...

"And I want to change it to 'Bill Stickypants'!"

Cheers dears. Rick.

**With the silly season just around the corner, our Hauraki-Coromandel region will once again be blessed with incredible gigs and performances catering to everyone. It's time to polish your dance shoes and get ready to sing the blues!**



Words by  
Leonardo Magri and Rick Steele

Photography by  
Karen McLeod Photography Ltd



# THE BEAT GOES ON

*A Final Dance with Courtney, Charli and Indaria*

This year, En Pointe Dance Studio says goodbye to three of its stars – Courtney, Charli and Indaria. They've spent years growing, dancing and making lifelong memories here, but now it's time for them to move on to new adventures. From tough rehearsals to amazing performances, these dancers have left their mark. And while they're stepping off our stage, their stories are far from over.



## Courtney Till



At 17, Courtney has been dancing at En Pointe for 13 years, starting when she was just four. Her earliest memory? A funny one – during a performance of *The Wizard of Oz*, her butterfly wings got tangled, and she was more focused on fixing them than scaring the main characters. “I couldn't stop laughing,” she recalls.

Over the years, Courtney's gone from being a quiet, shy dancer to one bursting with confidence. “My proudest moment was being trusted to help guide the younger dancers,” she says, reflecting on her growth into a leader at the studio.

But it wasn't all easy. She faced moments of self-doubt, but the support from her En Pointe whānau got her through. “The friendships I've made here are for life,” she adds.

As Courtney heads off to the UK, she plans to keep dancing and carry the lessons she's learned with her. Her advice to younger dancers? “Don't sweat the small stuff. Just have fun.”

## Charli Thackray



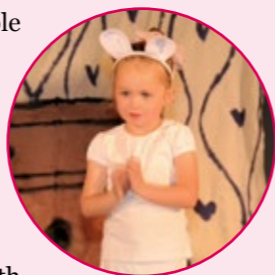
At 18, Charli has spent six unforgettable years at En Pointe. “Walking up those stairs was terrifying for 12-year-old me, but I fell in love with the studio right away,” she remembers. Shy at first, Charli found her voice and confidence through dance.

Her proudest moments? Definitely playing Shaggy in *Scooby-Doo* in 2020 and the centipede in *James and the Giant Peach*. “That role will always have a special place in my heart,” she says. Charli's biggest dance highlight was her last jazz solo, where she felt how far she'd come from her early performances.

But it wasn't all smooth sailing – Charli faced knee problems that started in 2021. “I've had to strap them up, and it's been tough at times,” she admits. Still, with the support of her friends, especially her ballet squad, the ‘OGs’, she pushed through.

Now, Charli's looking to the future, with hopes of teaching and attending a summer dance camp in the US. Her advice to new dancers? “Have fun and make the most of every moment – because nothing lasts forever.”

## Indaria Bainbridge-Davies



At 18, Indaria has spent an incredible 17 years dancing at En Pointe. “The bonds I've made here, especially with the younger students, are so special,” she says, reflecting on the connections that have shaped her.

Her dancing journey has been a mix of excitement and nerves, but the friendships she's built – filled with laughter, making TikToks and sharing cake – are memories she'll cherish forever. “Every moment with my friends has been joyful,” she adds.

Indaria admits it wasn't always easy. “Watching others master different skills at different times was tough,” she says, but learning to embrace her own journey helped her push through those moments of self-doubt.

Next year, Indaria heads to Christchurch to study full-time dance and performing arts. She hopes to inspire future generations, saying, “I want to help kids grow and cherish their memories, just like I have.”

Her advice for new dancers? “Try everything and give it your all.” And to her younger self: “Keep dancing – and stretch more!”

Courtney, Charli and Indaria now step into new chapters, carrying the passion, resilience and friendships they built at En Pointe. They've grown up within our dance whānau, and now it's their turn to pass on that spirit wherever life takes them. We know their love for dance will continue to shine, inspiring others just as they've inspired us. Thank you for the unforgettable memories – and here's to all the adventures ahead!

En Pointe Dance Studio Whitianga proudly presents:



Saturday, December 7th & Sunday, December 8th

Tickets available mid-November at:

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