

COROMIND



Issue 27

PLANTING THE FUTURE

Restoring the Kākāriki
Korowai of Te Puia

Mosaic Masterpieces

Inside Dessa Bluu's Artistic Haven

△ALTERNATIVE BEATS FROM THE PENINSULA△

Meet the 'Hazy and the Jays' Band

WAKA AMA IN TE WHITIANGA-A-KUPE

Connecting People with the Wai,
each other and Kaupapa Māori

Audio |||
Version



Kia ora

Welcome to Issue 27 of Coromind!

As we ease into the shoulder season, we're enjoying sunny days, a quieter pace, and locals making the most of a more relaxed Hauraki-Coromandel – while still sharing it with travellers soaking up the best of our region.

Coromind continues to grow as a strong media platform for positive community stories, education, and the arts, and we're excited about what's ahead. After the success of Coromind ArtWorks Fest – our first physical space, where we hosted a pop-up gallery with live music and special events over summer in Whitianga – our team is buzzing with ideas for new projects and collaborations that enrich our community's well-being.

We're also expanding online with a fresh, upgraded website and a new store featuring great products from our region – especially from our own brand.

If you've been following Coromind, you'll know we love a good series! Our rohe (region) is full of incredible people with knowledge and stories worth sharing, so consider this an open invitation – if you or someone you know would like to contribute, we'd love to hear from you. We're always up for learning something new. Get in touch at: hello@coromind.nz

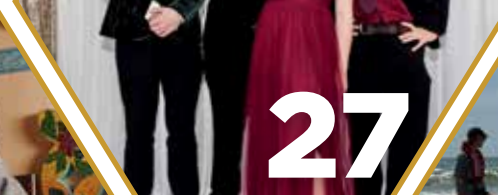
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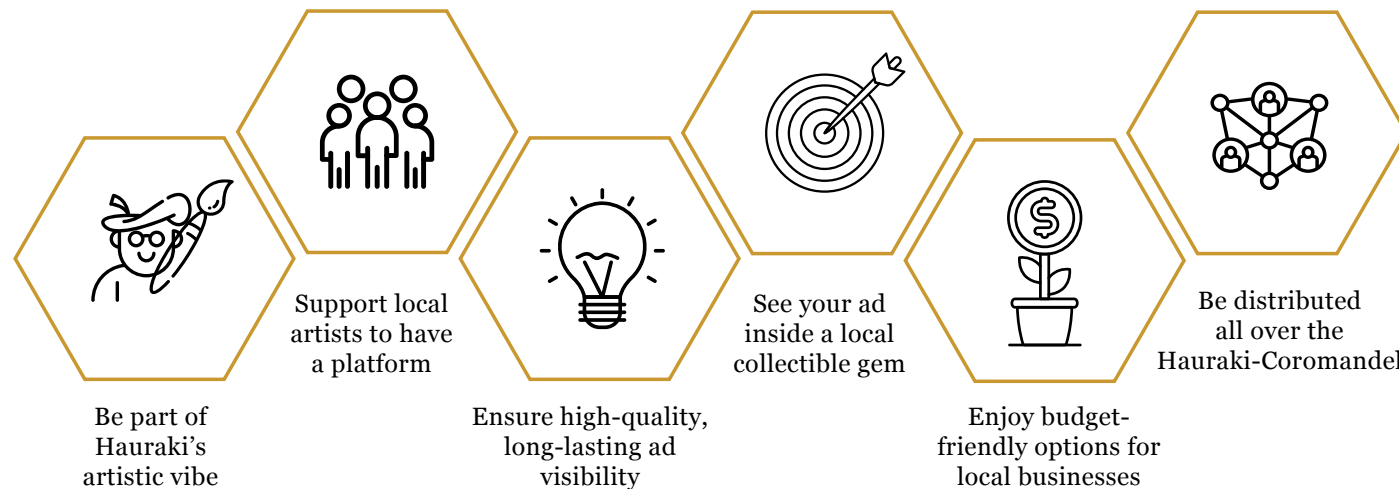
Now, go on – enjoy the beautiful stories we've put together for you this month.

Peace,

The Coromind team



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Get in touch: hello@coromind.nz

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Wendy is a professional mixed media artist with local and international clientele. Her genre is Mixed Media and she paints landscapes, still life, flora and fauna and is not shy to try new subjects and resources.

A qualified teacher, Wendy has conducted art workshops throughout the North Island, in her art school in Auckland and later in her studio classroom in Whitianga.

"It was a 'Eureka' moment when I read Mary Todd Beam's mixed media book, *Celebrate Your Creative Self*. The book, a Xmas present given to me by my late mother (an accomplished artist) inspired me to take my creative energy in a new direction and I set out to attend Mary's workshop in the North Carolina mountains, USA. The experience was enlightening; travelling from New Zealand to Springmaid Mountain was a journey in its own right, and I soon discovered my previous knowledge of design methodology and materials had been rather limited."

Subsequent workshops in the USA further enhanced her techniques. Wendy was trained by Patty Brady of GOLDEN Paints and utilises these art techniques every day. Other workshops attended were conducted by Carrie Burns, Robert Burrige, Mary Braukman, Pat Dews and Katherine Chang Liu. Wendy recommends their books and online presentations.

Pablo Picasso said, "All children are artists. The problem is to remain an artist when we grow up."

And this is so true. Too many people put off things that bring them joy just because they haven't thought about it, don't have it on their schedule, didn't know what was coming or are too rigid to depart from their routine.

COMMON MENTAL BLOCKS FOR THOSE WHO DON'T THINK THEY ARE CREATIVE:

- I have to be logical and practical
- I have to follow the rules
- I can't make mistakes
- I can't do anything that is not in my area
- I can't do anything that makes me look foolish
- I have to do what everyone else is doing

"Sport took all my free time when I was young and leaving my job as a Physical Education teacher to have a family enabled me to embrace a new hobby and a career from home. Creativity should be as important as literacy and we should treat it with the same status."

My art gives me great intrinsic pleasure and equally rewarding is the satisfaction from encouraging others to discover this amazing art journey themselves."

Vincent van Gogh said, "If you hear a voice within you say, 'you cannot paint', then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced."

Art by
Wendy Walls





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THE ANCIENT ART OF OLIVE OIL

Crafting Liquid Gold

time to
Indulge
series

Growing and producing olives for oil is an ancient process that dates well back into the BC years. The Mediterranean region, which has an optimal climate for olive production, was one of the first olive-growing areas to emerge all those years ago. Global production and consumption is truly vast, although the various growing seasons across the world do fluctuate in yield and therefore supply volumes definitely drive prices. Alert consumers will have noted olive oil prices increased steeply recently due to a world-wide shortage. Olives are an annual crop so this situation will probably change soon.

Besides food, olive oil has historically been used for religious rituals, medicine, fuel for small items such as lamps, and soap or skincare application.

These days, olive oil is used mostly for cooking, consumed stand-alone with specialty bread, or as an ingredient in many dishes. The term EVOO (or Extra Virgin Olive Oil) is based on the purity of the olive processed (no additives) and a lower level of acidity, but the basic rule is buy EVOO for a higher quality oil that you would eat directly, rather than simply shallow fry with. As well as tasting great, EVOO should always be high in polyphenols (nature's antioxidants) and have a range of beneficial health qualities.

In NZ, olive production is relatively new but the warmer dry parts of NZ make for excellent quality. As with so many other products, NZ is a high end producer and our oils are developed mainly with quality in mind. NZ's industry is small but vibrant and we are seeing a gradual phasing out of the 'hobby' type grower/producer, shifting to more commercial style operators. The charm of growing a beautiful grove of olives has to be offset against the work involved with grove husbandry – pruning, picking and general tree health needs.

Processing olives into oil basically involves crushing the fruit (stone in) into a pulp and this is then pressed and squeezed until the fluid component is separated sufficiently. The 'conversion rate' from a whole olive to the liquid component of oil is quite low. You might obtain about 20% of the whole olive as the final oil product.

The fun part is consumption! I love olive oil in so many ways. Here are some favourites:

The traditional fresh sourdough bread dipped in oil – add dukkah if you like.

My favourite breakfast is Vogel's toast with butter and a big topping of avocado. On the avocado pour a generous amount of EVOO and add freshly squeezed lemon with a little salt. Amazing.

I also pour EVOO on a poached or fried egg. It works.

Any salad is great with EVOO. Especially those with a tomato base, adding ingredients like red onion and herbs. Use lots of different coloured tomatoes to create more complex flavours in your dish. The orange and yellow ones light up a plate.

Vegetables are beautifully enhanced by EVOO and this can be used both pre- and post-cooking. Some of my favourites are broccolini, leeks, mushrooms, pumpkin, kumara and cauliflower. Use plenty of oil and experiment.

Venison and beef dishes respond well to EVOO. I would use it post-cooking as part of a finished and served dish.

EVOO is a great additive to baking. It provides moisture, texture and taste.

What I would encourage is to be generous in your application of EVOO to meals and cooking. Too little an amount won't deliver the full flavour, and always remember the fat content is one of the healthiest available and highly antioxidant rich.

A quick word on storage and life. Keep your olive oil stored away from light in a coolish environment. The best quality EVOO will last approximately 24 months if carefully stored.

If you are looking for inspiration and ideas to use EVOO then review the Instagram page of Allpress Olive Groves. Note: I am involved in this business – we delight in showcasing this beautiful product with recipes and education. Get creative!

@allpressolivegroves

Words by
Mike Taylor





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PROUD TO
BE LOCAL

Ronella Silbery

**WHAT ARE YOUR FAMILY LINKS
WITH MERCURY BAY?**

My great-great-grandparents, Mau and Eileen Silbery. Eileen Mary Caulton's father, Ike, was one of the first settlers on Marine Parade, Cooks Beach. I grew up with the best view of Motukorure Island (Centre Island), watching the sun rise and set through our homestead's windows, witnessing powerful cyclones and peaceful, sunny days.

WHERE ARE YOU LIVING NOW?

I've been in Sydney for about 15 years, though I first moved to Australia in 2004, settling in Melbourne. I worked at Woolworths DC, Mulgrave, for five years – driving forklifts, picking and packing for the stores, and meeting some great people. Now, I work in stevedoring at Port Botany, operating big cranes on the docks, driving heavy machinery, and working on container ships, unloading and securing cargo.

**WHEN WERE YOU LIVING IN THE
COROMANDEL?**

It all began in Cooks Beach around February 1976. My sister, Sophie Silbery, and I were adopted by our great-great-grandparents, so I attended Whenuakite Primary School from about 1980 until I was 12 or 13; after that, I went to MBAS until I was around sixteen. I received a great education here and had some of the best teachers. One standout was our PT teacher, Ron Morgan, who led us on many adventures. He organised activities like sailing on the Spirit of Adventure and drove us to athletics

and other sports events. He was a pivotal and positive role model in our lives.

**WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING
SINCE SCHOOL?**

I moved to Auckland at 16 and stayed with my grandparents while attending Ngā Tapuwae College, led by Kapa Stirling (now Southern Cross). I got involved in sports and kapa haka with my whānau. Later, I attended Avondale High School and continued with kapa haka there. I worked at Pt Chev petrol station and Tahi Clothing on Queen St before having my son, Joshua Hapimana Silbery-Martin, at nineteen. I then moved to Waiouru, where my ex-partner was in the NZ Army Artillery Corps. In 1998, I did a short stint in the Army, topping my basic training – a bit of a blast. I later worked as a civilian steward and supplier quartermaster, reconnecting with old college friends and whānau. Next, I moved to Whanganui, where I had two more children, Taylor and Te Arika Silbery-Nepia. I worked for IHC as a community support worker, a role I really enjoyed, and later attended UCOL, graduating with a double diploma in business management.

**WHAT ACHIEVEMENT ARE YOU
MOST PROUD OF?**

Joining the Army was a major highlight of my life. I served as a steward and regular soldier, working as a supplier quartermaster at the ammunition depot, of all places. A special highlight is my three beautiful children, who have blessed me with eight amazing mokos.

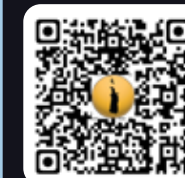


**WHAT ARE YOUR FONDEST
MEMORIES OF THE
COROMANDEL?**

Running and playing in the sand dunes at Cooks Beach with my sister and school friends was a favourite pastime. The Cooks Beach Athletics Club, run by my great-great-grandparents Mau and Eileen Silbery, was a big part of our lives. I loved throwing the discus and competing in 400-metre relays. We played all kinds of sports, even soccer, travelling across the North Island for events. School camp at Ruapehu was another highlight – skiing down the slopes like we were professionals, fearless and full of adventure.

Brought to you by
Ron Morgan

This is an edited version of a
bigger heartfelt chat between
**Ronella and her ex-teacher Ron
Morgan. Scan the QR code below
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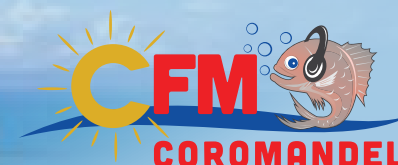
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LOVE YOUR FOOD, LOVE YOUR WALLET:

Simple ways to cut food waste



Every time we throw food away, we're not just tossing scraps – we're throwing away money, resources, and a chance to care for our environment.

Throwing away money

In Aotearoa, households waste an estimated 157,000 tonnes of food every year, costing the average family over \$1,500 annually. That's money that could be better spent on something far more rewarding than a bin full of wasted kai! But here's the good news: every small action we take makes a difference. Planning meals, storing food correctly, and getting creative with leftovers can all help reduce waste – and it's easier than you think.

Simple delicious ideas

That's where Wāhi Tukurua's Kete Kai cookbook comes in! Packed with simple, delicious, and waste-savvy recipes, it's designed to help you make the most of what you already have. Got a few sad veggies in the fridge? Turn them into a hearty soup. Stale bread? Hello, homemade croutons or bread chips! By making a habit of using every bit of our food, we save money, cut waste, and do our bit for the planet.

Not just what's on our plates

Reducing food waste isn't just about what's on our plates – it's about valuing the resources that go into growing, transporting, and preparing our food. When we waste less, we honour the work of our farmers, protect our whenua, and lighten our grocery bills. Want more tips and tasty inspiration? Check out Kete Kai by visiting Wāhi Tukurua on Facebook or the website to learn more and buy your copy. Together, we can turn small changes into big impacts – one meal at a time.



Words by Tracey Bell - Chair Wāhi Tukurua

CRAFT HAUS GASTROPUB

A Local Favourite for Great Food, Beer & Atmosphere in Whangamata



If the locals love a place, you know it's worth a visit. That's exactly what you'll find at Craft Haus Gastropub in Whangamata – a warm, welcoming spot where great food, craft beer and community come together. Owned and operated by Phil and Natalie Keogh, along with their daughters Poppy and Isla, Craft Haus has quickly become a favourite for both locals and visitors.

For Phil and Natalie, Whangamata is paradise. After more than 20 years in the hospitality industry, including time spent working in London, the Keoghs decided it was time to create something of their own. "Living in London taught us a lot," says Phil. "Over there, the local pub is central to the community. That sense of connection inspired us to create a gathering place for Whangamata."

The name Craft Haus combines their love of craft beer with a nod to European style. True to its name, the gastropub offers a carefully curated selection of New Zealand independent beers, including McLeod's Brewery from Waipū, Eddyline from Nelson (known for its sustainable brewing practices), and Whangamata's own Salt District, brewed right across the road. The wine list also shines, focusing on boutique New Zealand labels that steer clear of supermarket brands.

The food at Craft Haus is every bit as impressive as the drinks. The menu is designed for sharing and includes scratch-made pizzas with creative twists, hearty burgers, fresh seasonal pastas, and light summer salads. Kids will love the mini pizzas, pasta, and classic hot chips, while vegetarians and vegans can enjoy options crafted

with just as much care. Chef Craig Watson brings vibrant flavours to every dish, ensuring there's something for everyone.

The welcoming vibe isn't just in the food and drinks – it's in the people too. Front-of-house manager Acacia adds youthful energy and a friendly smile that keeps customers coming back. The space itself is perfect for any occasion, with a large covered outdoor area that's ideal for group gatherings or private functions of up to 50 guests.

Craft Haus is more than just a place to eat and drink; it's a part of the community. Phil and Natalie are proud supporters of local sports teams and events, from the Junior League and Whangamata Rugby Club to charity golf days. "We've received so much positive feedback and support," says Natalie. "Giving back to the community that's embraced us is something we care deeply about."

Open five days a week during winter (Wednesday to Sunday, 2:30 pm until late) and with extended hours in summer, Craft Haus is the perfect place to unwind after a day at the beach or enjoy a night out with family and friends.

So, whether you're after a refreshing craft beer, a flavourful meal, or a spot to soak up the local vibe, Craft Haus Gastropub has it all. Drop by and see why it's a place the locals love – you'll be glad you did!

For more information, visit: crafthauswhanga.co.nz



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PLANTING THE FUTURE

Restoring the Kākāriki Korowai of Te Puia

Continuing from my introductory story of my arrival at Te Puia (Hot Water Beach) in 1964, I will explore the reasons why I became so passionate about restoring the biodiversity of the enchanted Te Puia Pā site.

Going back to the 1950s and the start of my education journey at Bayswater Primary School on Auckland's North Shore, I met my all-time favourite teacher Miss Kapa. Miss Kapa taught us waiata (Māori songs, chants), stick games and our times tables by chanting over and over together. Standing and clapping, she swayed and smiled as she led the chants in front of us. It was 1958, she enthralled us again with stories about Richard St. Barbe Baker who founded Men of Trees Society in 1922.

He was an explorer, forester and inspirational leader and was in New Zealand as a keynote speaker at the inaugural meeting of Men of Trees Society of Southland on the 17th of May 1958.

When he visited our school, two members of our class were selected to go with him to plant acorns (English Oak) in the corner of our rugby field. I was selected along with the late Sir Peter Blake (who was tragically killed by pirates aboard his vessel Seamaster in the mouth of the Amazon River, December 5th 2001). The oak trees are still there and mark the time I heard Richard St. Barbe Baker's desperate call to action: "We have to plant forests for our lives." His call has resulted in millions of trees being planted around the world. My small part in ngahere (forest) restoration has been through planting projects and helping establish nurseries around the North Island.

Nearly 30 years ago, the opportunity came up as a member of the HWB reserve management committee to do something here at Te Puia (Hot Water Beach). There have been many members of the committee over the years. Back then it was Anne Elliot, the late Gordon Pye, his son Graham Pye (founder of Te Puia Nursery), the late Paul Butler, the late Joe Nelms and me. We worked alongside TCDC (the local council) to enhance and manage our reserves at Te Puia. Our annual budget was \$5,000 and was usually allocated to picnic tables, rubbish bins, signage and memorial seats, seemingly mundane things but we all became familiar with the boundaries of our recreational reserves. Surprisingly we also became aware that Te Puia Pā was listed as 'Road Domain' and not 'Historic Reserve'. Backed by the consistent efforts of conservationist Anne Elliot, we began planting programmes on the reserves at Te Puia (Hot Water Beach). Graham Pye supplied good quality eco sourced plants at cost from his local nursery, his father Gordon brought his scout group out and together we planted the Taiwawe Stream banks – that planting now shelters the walkway to the Top Ten Holiday Park. Gordon also started planting pōhutukawa on the seaward side of Te Puia Pā. The existing pōhutukawa were being ravaged by possums. Anne's husband began trapping and poisoning them, local resident Adam Clow is leading this work now under the umbrella of Purangi Conservation Trust. We shifted from bins and signs to spending our entire annual budget on trees and trapping.

Ngāti Hei have been actively involved since the start, as of course it is their rohe (area).

The late Peter Tiki Johnson and Joe Davis came out and walked around the site, pointing out remnants of ancient defensive trenches and whare (buildings). These areas were to be left unplanted so future generations could explore and see these earthworks. Joe attended our HWB Reserve Management Committee meetings when his workload allowed. His knowledge and kōrero motivated us to increase our restoration efforts. We started organising annual Harbour Day plantings on the 5th of June, which he attended and always opened with a whakanoa (removal of tapu, or prohibition) at dawn. When the volunteers arrived there was karakia (prayer), followed by kōrero (discussion) on the significance of the site and the work to restore it. He closed the event with poroporoaki (traditional farewell). For many of the local school children who attended these plantings, this was their first experience of tikanga (customs) and te ao Māori (Māori worldview). The poroporoaki was to return the site to its tapu status. For me I had experienced and seen evidence of past battles that needed tapu, or protection.

In April 1982, tropical cyclone Bernie took its toll on Te Puia, flooding the area now occupied by the Top Ten Holiday Park, through the original Hot Water Beach motor camp which is now beachfront housing, and right across the camper van parking before the one-way bridge – which we called 'the bull paddock' back then. Huge seas combined with the rushing river gouged the sand dunes on the far side of the Taiwawe stream at the foot of Te Puia Pā, creating huge sand cliffs 4 to 5 metres high. As the flood waters receded, I walked with Gordon Pye along the bottom edge of these new cliffs and discovered skeletons entombed in the sand. On recent reserve maps the area is marked as urupā. Legislation has given urupā reservations a special status in legal terms as well as having family, spiritual, cultural and historical importance (Judge Stephanie Milroy, the Māori Land Court). The bones looked ancient and were most likely relics from Ngāpuhi incursions into the area around 1817 to 1820. The sand cliffs began to collapse and within days the skeletons were reburied. It seemed appropriate that the sand rapidly re-entombed them, away from prying eyes and 'curio' collectors.

That image has stayed clear in my mind to this day. There are many other individual stories relating to that particular area; this is just one of my experiences. You will notice that I have referred to many individuals in this piece as 'the late'; that is to honour those who have passed away as I continue my journey. Another avid supporter was the late Duce Pohatu who brought Te Kura o Te Whanganui-o-Hei students to a planting where the heavens opened and the rain fell in icy torrents... That story will continue another day ...

Ngā mihi nui

Words by
Howard Saunders



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BENEATH THE WAVES

UNDERWATER ENCOUNTERS WITH CATHEDRAL COVE DIVE & SNORKEL






The ocean floor suddenly comes to life – a grey winged creature unveils itself. It takes flight, gliding effortlessly along the sand. The stingray – or 'whai' in te reo – can be found in abundance on our coast during the summer months. Belonging to the same family as sharks, whai also have skeletons of cartilage. They bury themselves beneath the sand to hide from predators and flee when they feel threatened. Whai feed on crustaceans, worms, molluscs, fish and zoo-plankton. Their barbed tails – 'hoto' in te reo – contain venom that is released when used to puncture.

Whai have been on earth since the Upper Cretaceous period more than 65 million years ago. Despite having existed for so long, much is still unknown about these elusive creatures.

Following the unfortunate incident with Steve Irwin, they have earned a bad reputation. However, in New Zealand there have only been a few reported incidents involving injuries from stingrays. We want to help debunk the myth that they are dangerous creatures. They are more curious than aggressive, and if given their space they pose no threat.

Whai can often be seen in our dive sites, with some sites having a few residents during the summer months. Whether you are scuba diving or snorkelling, there is an opportunity to see them cruising around.

On our trips, a variety of marine life can be seen. Being situated so close to the Te-Whanganui-o-Hei reserve allows us to appreciate how our marine environments thrive when looked after. The volcanic coastline of Hahei offers a variety of dive sites to be explored. With many sites having a diverse underwater terrain, we often combine SCUBA and snorkelling trips on the same boat, giving everyone a chance to see the beauty below the sea.

Hapuku Reef rises up out of nowhere to 6 m, from a depth of 25 m on the ocean side. The most startling feature is the sheer 20 m drop off to the sand on a wall covered with jewel anemones, mauve finger sponges and colourful encrusting sponges.

Okorotere Island, only a five-minute ride from Hahei Beach, is one of our favorite snorkelling spots. The rocks are well covered with encrusting sponges, orange and pink golf ball sponges, and eelonia kelp. Many resident sand dagger, moki, brilliant blue maomao, red mullet, rays and crayfish live in this protected area, with schools of mackerel, kahawai, kingfish and koheru visiting in the summer.

We have four snorkelling trips and three SCUBA trips operating daily. If you aren't a swimmer – no worries! We can provide buoyancy devices to keep you afloat. So much of the beauty of Hahei is located under the water, don't miss out!

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DIVE & SNORKEL CATHEDRAL COVE

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Words by **Rebecca Rushing**



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From Pacific Memories to Mosaic Masterpieces

Inside Dessa Bluu's Artistic Haven

There's a big sparkly sign in the shape of a surfboard as you pass the Tairua home of Dessa Bluu. It's done in mosaic with a Pacific design and is just one of this imaginative artist's creations.

Tucked at the back of her home is her workshop, where glass mosaic frangipani are propped beside vibrant portraits and florals and dramatic sculptures. Revealing Dessa's quirky sense of humour are three mosaic heads 'Tom, Dick and Harry'. And the mosaics in her garden include a pair of upside-down glittery women's legs! A spare room stores more of her work including a stunning piece entitled 'Reihana'. It is here you may find her scouring through sheets of stained or iridised and shimmering glass which is fragmented to create her dynamic art.

Dessa's mother is Samoan, her father Pākehā, and she grew up with five siblings in Ponsonby when it was a Pacific-Māori community.

"We were poor and had a tough life," she recalls. "I was a bit of a loner but always searching for the right tribe to be part of. And I loved writing and drawing. Still do."

In the 1980s, she wanted to attend art school but needed to get a job, so worked in Social Services for Christine Rankin – a woman she much admired. Dessa started painting about 30 years ago. In 2015, she left city life and moved to Tairua, along with second husband Murray. And that's

when she embraced the art of mosaic on a more serious level.

"I bought a couple of books and just knew I'd keep at it. My passion for creating mosaic art stems from its unique ability to assemble narratives reflecting real-life events and experiences. Each mosaic is a quintessence of hidden stories waiting to be unearthed. Every glass fragment contributes to the narrative and the entire composition reveals a story that unfolds as I immerse myself in the work.

"Creating art has always been my sanctuary, a refuge where I can quiet any adverse thoughts and find solace during challenging times. I'm deeply moved by how the creative process has allowed me to express my innermost thoughts and responses. Throughout my life, I've harnessed creativity to capture the essence of my struggles and triumphs. The transformative power of creating art has not only healed and strengthened me, but enriched my creative practice over time."

Dessa recently completed a glass mosaic artwork of a Hibiscus flower, paying homage to the Pacific Islanders who migrated to Ponsonby and Grey Lynn in the 1950s and 1960s and who altered the cultural landscape of those neighbourhoods. Hibiscus trees they planted still stand today, beautiful reminders of their homelands and rich traditions they brought with them.



Photo Credit Creative Waikato



Creative Tribe

Reflecting on the Coromandel artists that she considers part of her 'creative tribe', Dessa says Isabel Gilbert-Palmer is one standout figure in Kūaotunu. "This creative influencer is behind the Māori and Pasifika art exhibitions. Her sometimes-quirky approach is appealing and she possesses an extraordinary gift – the ability to recognise and nurture the unique potential within artists. Her impact extends beyond artistic development.

Whangamatā Arts Collective is another beacon of inspiration for Dessa. "Art, by its very nature, is fraught with challenges – yet this collective's willingness to navigate and understand my miscommunications and misunderstandings with grace is something I deeply respect. Their professionalism ensures every artist's work is valued and respected as taonga. The inclusion of local Iwi and artists from beyond their immediate catchment speaks volumes about their commitment and integrity.

"What captivates me most about Whangamatā Arts Collective is its steadfast commitment to nurturing and engaging with younger creatives across all artistic platforms. Recently the collective expanded its inclusion of writers, recognising the profound impact literary arts can have on the creative community."

"Creative Coromandel and Creative Waikato are true powerhouses in our community," says Dessa. "They're the pinnacle for bringing creatives and their communities together. Creative Coromandel, in particular, has provided me with countless opportunities to grow and learn.

"Fiona Cameron, the chair of Creative Coromandel, is the driving force of passion and proactive energy for the arts in the Coromandel. Her dynamic and spirited style envelops the art community with an inclusive and invigorating energy.

"Connections I've made in the Coromandel have been transformative. Not everything I create or how I express myself resonates with everyone and that's just as it should be. Finding the right people where I feel welcomed and valued has been my journey of growth and discovery."


Dessa's work has been displayed at The Art Show Across Aotearoa and she is keen to enter more exhibitions. Her dream is to tour the world viewing mosaics of famous artists.

"But right now life is good and my art is only getting better and better – well, that's my perspective!"



Words by


Pamela Ferla



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Health Essentials

Solitude vs. Loneliness: Finding Comfort in Your Own Company

Hello Coromind readers! Another month, and here I am. How has mind fitness been going for you? Well, I hope. This month, I have a health and wellness topic people either love or hate: How comfortable do you feel being alone? Yes, with yourself.

Now, before proceeding, I want to add this caveat: Sometimes, when we practise being alone with ourselves and our thoughts, we need support from someone trained to help, like a therapist, counsellor, or health care professional. Because the truth is, sometimes the demons in your mind are dark, and to be alone with them could be really scary and triggering. Unfortunately, such is life.

But this won't be the case for everyone. Some of you who are cringing while reading this will just need to lean into the discomfort of being alone.

If you are someone who likes to spend time with themselves, you still might get something from this article, so read on. And if you belong to the camp that hates the idea of being alone, there will be lots to reflect on. Maybe you don't think you mind being alone; however, I am hoping this article gives you some food for thought.

Ideally, being alone, spending time in our own company, is based on liking who we are, otherwise it can be a nasty spiral downwards. We have to believe that we are good people and what we are doing in the world is good ('good' being a loaded word which is specific to each individual perspective). To be alone with yourself, you have to enjoy your own company.

Sometimes we can be alone but turn to drinking or smoking or drugs – something to do with the time we have for ourselves or something that helps to numb the discomfort we feel from being alone.

I personally find a heap of other factors that come into play when being alone. "Will people think I don't have friends or have been rejected from 'the group'?" is the biggest one – the act of how I will

be perceived for spending time alone. I also find that more intense in my hometown (here). Absolutely fine to travel the world alone and sit in cafes and restaurants alone, go to festivals alone – but as soon as I am back in the place where people know me, there is a lot more fear.

It's important to learn to be alone because this whole world is filled with noise, from social media, the news, the people we spend time with. It's easy to just be a part of it all and not ever really know who we are and what we stand for. Yet these are two of the most important questions we can answer. When we spend time alone, we learn these things without the outside noise of everyone else, and we also learn to trust ourselves more. We have to make our own decisions and we have to live with our own consequences. We stop having excuses to blame others and we learn to take radical responsibility.

Not to confuse loneliness with being alone. Loneliness is being alone and feeling like something is missing. We can go here when we first start to spend time alone if we have spent most of our lives with or around other people. In these moments, it helps to show yourself kindness and gentleness.

If being alone is challenging for you, then I offer this advice: Lean into the discomfort. Start to be aware of when you are filling your time and days with other people. Being by yourself and on your phone doesn't count as being alone -- your phone is distracting you. Try observing the thoughts and feelings coming up, without judging them. Get curious about them. See if there are pockets of your day, or even whole days, that you can spend by yourself. And have fun with it.

I'd love to know your thoughts on being alone. Do you love the idea, or hate it? You can find me over on Instagram, @lifeaskaitlyn, or check out my website, www.lifeaskaitlyn.com

Words by
Kaitlyn Gooch

A Nose for a Nuisance Weed

Wink is a one-eyed Conservation Dog from Invercargill with an important job: detecting pests and sniffing out Spartina grass.

His well-tuned nose has brought him up all the way up to Hauraki and Coromandel.

Initially, Wink missed out on a heading dog role due to his eye problem, but a career change saw him go through the intensive training to become a certified Conservation Dog, thriving on using his strong sense of smell.

Since 2018, Wink and his handler John Taylor have been working across Aotearoa, searching for the pest plant spartina (*Sporobolus anglicus*, *Sporobolus alterniflorus*) in estuaries and waterways on behalf of the Department of Conservation (DOC) and councils. The duo has recently supported spartina control efforts in the lower Firth of Thames and Eastern Coromandel.

Introduced to Aotearoa in the early 1940s to stabilise estuaries and riverbanks, spartina has since overtaken natural habitats. DOC Hauraki Biodiversity Ranger, Ken Brown, says its impact in our waterways is far-reaching.

“Spartina grows rapidly and destroys intertidal habitats by converting wetlands into dry grasslands. This impacts the whole ecosystem, including wading birds, shellfish, and fish species that rely on wetlands,” says Ken.

Spartina removes the habitats of protected shorebirds including kuaka/bar-tailed godwit, moho pereū/banded rail, and tūturiwhatu/dotterel. Unchecked, its dense growth can also reduce wetlands’ natural flood control benefits by raising the ground level.

For humans, spartina is easiest to spot during seeding. Dogs, however, can sniff it out all year round. And that’s where Wink comes in. He can cover ground faster than any human can by foot, especially over mudflats, and he can detect even the smallest parts of the plant – the seeds. He bounds, he leaps, he sniffs, always on the search for that familiar smell.

Ken says Wink’s skill in detecting spartina has been invaluable for control in the Firth of Thames.

“Wink’s ability has been the difference between success and failure. Humans simply cannot do it alone.

“We will be walking along what looks to the human eye like a native sedge patch and Wink will put his nose amongst it



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indicating he has detected sometimes even just a single blade of spartina.”

Wink and John’s efforts have already had a massive impact on the South Island waterways, with more than 99 per cent of spartina now being cleared.

Ken hopes this can be achieved in the Firth of Thames: “We had about 900 sites of spartina, though thanks to Wink’s detection some of these are now down to zero density.

“Over the years, we have repeatedly monitored and sprayed spartina sites. It is only in the following years, after Wink located small hidden patches, that we’re beginning to find fewer and fewer sites. We are well on the way to eradication, which before, wasn’t feasible due to the nature of the salt marsh,” says Ken.

On the eastern side of the peninsula, Wink and John have detected spartina in Waikawau estuary and Whangapoua harbour.

Throughout the year, the duo will travel across the country, spending their days walking the intertidal zones and mudflats together on a common mission: to find any traces of Spartina and help rid Aotearoa of this destructive weed.

DOC’s Coromandel team will be engaging with the community about upcoming Spartina control in the area. More details to come.

You can find out more about the Conservation Dogs programme at:

www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-dog-programme/



FROM OLD ENGLISH TO TE REO MĀORI

HISTORY IS ENCODED IN THE WORDS OF A LANGUAGE

Each one of us carries the ability to communicate and understand the world around us through language. The languages that we use are not inanimate objects or meaningless tools that we use as a means to an end. They are an extension of culture, containing all the different ways to describe, categorise, and interpret the world.

Over thousands of years, the world’s languages (there are over 7,000 languages spoken around the world, by the way) have been handed down through generations and across different cultural groups, with each making changes to the language to better meet the demands of the time.

All the changes each generation makes, be it new words, new grammatical patterns, even new pronunciation, are like bookmarks in the story of a language. When you look closer at those little bookmarks, some of them reveal stories of large scale wars, migrations, colonisation, exploration, societal schisms, even the rise and fall of empires. An example? Well, we can start with the name of the language this article is written in.

The origin of the word ‘English’ comes from when Germanic tribes called the Angles and Saxons began invading and populating Britain 1,600 years ago. Anglo-Saxon was shortened to Anglos, over time turning to English, and finally becoming what we refer to now as Old English, the ancestor of modern English. This is why English is called a Germanic language instead of a Celtic language like the other tongues of Great Britain. The name ‘England’ used to be something akin to ‘Angla-land’. If you say it fast, it’s easy to see how we got to the modern name.

English’s sister languages are German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and a few others forming what we call the Germanic language family. Our words for numbers, days of the week, plus everyday words for family and common animals are all Germanic, with parallels in those other Germanic languages. But then we notice there’s all this Old French stuff in the English language as well, another historical bookmark. In 1066, the French absolutely smashed their way into England through war and conquest.

By holding power in England, the Norman French occupied the upper levels of society while the English-speaking population was pushed into lower status positions, such as labourers and farmers. So, the English words for farm animals like cow, sheep, chicken, pig/swine, and others

are all Germanic because the farmers were speaking a Germanic language.

But the French were often the ones in the restaurants eating the food, and so the names for the foods are all essentially French in the English language; poultry, beef, pork. This class divide can also be seen today in many of our legal and academic words. If someone is speaking using very formal, technical language today, chances are they are using way more French words than normal.

But bringing this home, you can also see shared cultures, shared histories, mind-boggling voyages, and connections over vast expanses when we consider te reo Māori and its language family. The Polynesian language family is a subgroup of a much larger family, with the closest sister languages to te reo being te reo Māori, Hawaiian, Tahitian, Rarotongan, and the language of Easter Island (Rapanui). Other languages in this group include Samoan and Tongan but these are not as closely related to te reo Māori.

Now take out your phone and look at a map. Look at the distances between Hawaii, Tahiti, Rarotonga, Easter Island, and Aotearoa. How closely related the languages are and how far apart they are from one another geographically hints that there was a technological boom that revolutionised sailing, sending many more waka out into the waves and further than before. This kickstart in exploring the entire Pacific Ocean is hinted at in the languages, because those languages also journeyed with their speakers over those distant horizons, and they have many more stories to tell us.

The words that come out of our mouths when we speak are not just random sounds slapped together into sentences. They are encoded with thousands of years of history. They form the way we see and describe the world and people around us. As a linguist, every word is precious, and I think many people would benefit from seeing it this way too.



Words by
Matt Bowden



Ross' Ramblings Game Fishing & the Lorax

I have loved fishing for most of my 73 years. As a youngster, I went with my father and his mates game fishing in Bay of Islands waters. I was sometimes seasick and had to be dropped off at Deep Water Cove to while away the day while the fishermen scoured the ocean towing a dead kahawai along the surface. On one such day they returned to pick me up and had a large marlin draped over the stern of the boat. Of course, my dad and his mates were over the moon, celebrating with copious rums and beers while they towed their trophy to the weigh station for the obligatory photos, after which the once mighty fish was unceremoniously dumped out at sea. No smoked marlin on the menu in those days, just the thrill of the kill and the celebrations after the weigh in. This was in the 1960s, but since the 1920s when American fisherman Zane Grey established NZ as a game fishing El Dorado, this practice of dumping was common. "Every fish was brought in for weighing, and, after weighing, its carcass was dumped. It would no more have occurred to these men to release a fish alive than to flavour their tea with Tabasco sauce." (nzgeo.com)

As a child I didn't really think this was unusual, as it was what my dad and his mates did. Fortunately, this sordid practice has slowly been replaced by the more fish-friendly 'tag and release' protocol, although if a marlin could speak, the word 'friendly' might not feature in its description of being hooked in the mouth and fighting for its life for an hour or more, then being released – to either die of exhaustion, or slowly recover to be caught again so its tag can be recovered to show that it didn't die ... warm fuzzies for the recreational fishers. As only 0.55% of tags are recovered (only 3 per year), and given that many recreational catches of marlin go unrecorded, accurate catch rates could be difficult to assess. So who knows how many marlin die after being released?

Those fish that are landed are often kept in the hope of breaking some sort of record, or to win the top prize in a game fishing competition. Striped marlin, although decreasing in number, are apparently not yet endangered, whereas other types of marlin, like the blue and black varieties are more vulnerable. According to Hauraki Gulf campaigner and marine environmentalist, Shaun Lee, "The sports fishing industry awards and celebrates the capture of the largest fish. Large old fish produce more eggs and sperm than younger fish. Female billfish are larger than males. This means the most productive members of the population are landed for records, trophies and prizes. A large blue marlin at a weigh-in station does not represent a gain of 500 kg of freezer meat, but a loss of millions of eggs which could have helped rebuild the population. The situation is just as important for our striped marlin which have lost 94% of their spawning biomass since 1960s." Besides, who can afford to smoke 500 kilos of marlin at \$4 a kilo, especially if it didn't win a prize?

Lee also says, "The activity recklessly ill-treats animals (an offence under section 28 A of the NZ Animal Welfare Act); it also contravenes other sections of the act (30A1-3)."

The SPCA would also like to see an end to game fishing, while Forest and Bird publishes a Best Fish (to eat) Guide

which takes into account fishery sustainability and presumably mercury content, and relegates marlin and yellowfin tuna to the 'no eat' red zone.

So, as you can probably gather, I would rather not target marlin myself. I get it that fishermen and women find it exciting. It can be a thrill when a reel suddenly starts screaming, and given the popularity of the activity, and the sponsor money and marketing behind it, I imagine that game fishing itself and its associated competitions, like trophy hunting animal safaris in Africa and cigarette smoking, will die a slow death. Although with the coalition government's recent cave-in to the tobacco lobby, smoking might last a little longer, with the loss of hundreds of more lives.

Considering the huge increase in the numbers of recreational boats now chasing the game fish, it might be wise to enact measures to ensure that these beautiful, great creatures of the deep don't become seriously endangered.

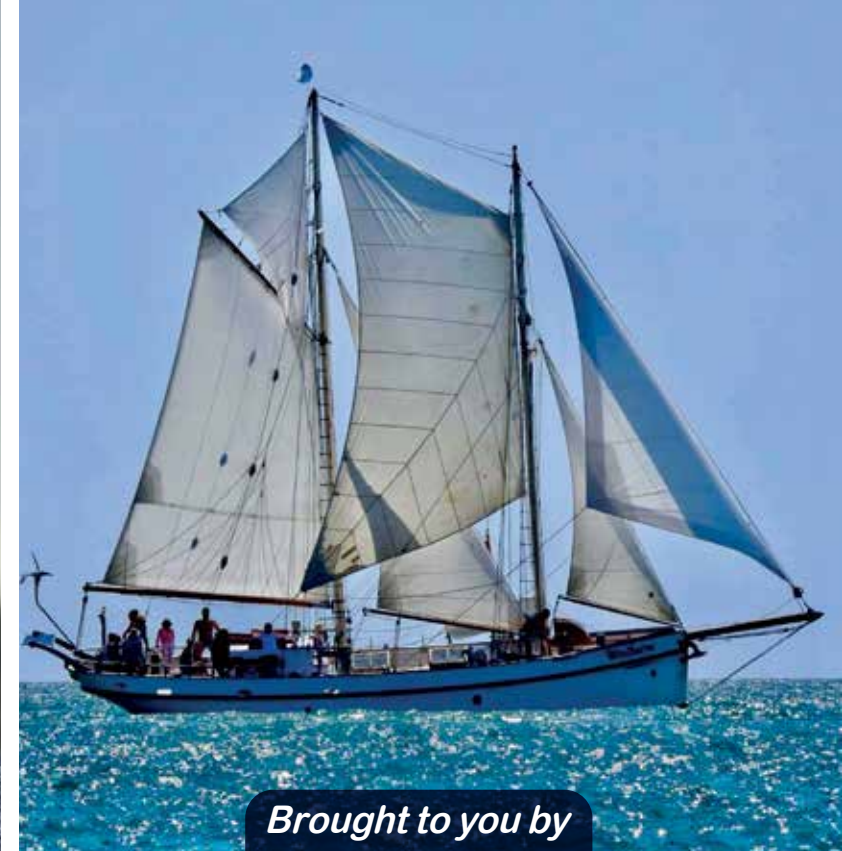
With this gradual demise idea in mind, I would like to offer some possible interim changes that could be made to competition rules:

- Use barbless hooks. This would give the fish more of a chance of freeing itself.
- Ban the use of drones and other fish finding electronics to locate fish.
- Limit the number of lures trolled to two per boat.
- Give prize money to the smallest of a species landed instead of the biggest. Let the photos tell the story of huge fish being released.
- As game fishing is largely a matter of luck, release all fish and distribute the millions in prize money by spot prizes.

Eventually, probably not in my lifetime, when killing fish in fishing competitions becomes unnecessary for human fun, and fish are only killed for eating, or when a lack of fish causes sponsors to cease providing millions in prize money, perhaps hookless lures could be trolled and when fish are teased to the surface, the team photographer could jump over, snap the beautiful fish and enter his or her best shots in a truly sustainable competition. That would take real courage.

And if you want to save the ocean and the air from the emissions from 460 boats burning around 300,000 litres of petrol and diesel in Kubota's four-day competition, you could just not have it in the first place. Ah, but what about the economic benefits I hear some of you say? Well, yes there are undoubtedly benefits for the town, but I would urge you to have a wee read of Dr. Seuss's children's book *The Lorax*, which was actually banned in the US because it criticised the logging industry. It could also apply to fishing. Ah, the power of big money ...

Words by
Ross Liggins



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DRIVING CREEK POTTERY: AN APPRENTICESHIP

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Coromandel's historic Driving Creek Pottery is offering a unique opportunity for an up-and-coming creative: an apprenticeship position to join the production pottery team and be fully trained in the craft of making pots.

Most in the Coromandel will be familiar with the story of Driving Creek: established in the early 70s by polymath potter, train enthusiast and conservationist Barry Brickell, Driving Creek evolved organically over its more than fifty-year history. It became a significant hub for the clay arts in Aotearoa and around the world, hosting and fostering many of this country's most notable potters and creatives. Before Barry died in 2016, he had the foresight to put Driving Creek into a charitable trust. This model ensures that profits from the tourism operations go back into supporting the arts and conservation efforts at Driving Creek.

On the opposite side of the world in 2014, Cornishman Callum Trudgeon joined The Leach Pottery production team as their first fully trained apprentice in more than forty years. Established in 1920 by legendary potters Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada, The Leach Pottery in St. Ives is arguably the most significant pottery in the world. It is the birthplace of the 'studio pottery' movement that rebelled against industrialisation and mass production in favour of the handmade and bringing craft back into the home. The Leach became a training ground for some of the most influential potters of the last hundred years.

Two years ago, Callum traded The Leach and his homeland for Coromandel Town. He was recruited by Driving Creek for a special purpose: to establish a production pottery at Driving Creek. His task was to combine the traditions, structure and rigour of production at The Leach with the creative freedom and vernacular charm of Barry's Driving Creek. With this in mind, Callum set about designing a pottery range that would pay tribute to these two histories. After a stint training at The Leach herself, Tokomaru Bay-born potter Matilda Halley joined the team. For the past two years, she and Callum have been steadily churning out pots in the red barn at Driving Creek. The handcrafted pottery range they produce can be found in the Driving Creek shop, online and in select shops around the motu.

Both Callum and Matilda are aware of how lucky they both were to have had the opportunity to learn the

craft through apprenticeship schemes. Apprenticeships were once common in Aotearoa, but with the decline of the pottery industry in the 1980s, they have become rare. Despite pottery's recent resurgence, formal training opportunities to master the craft remain scarce. And so begins the Driving Creek Pottery apprenticeship scheme. For the first time ever, we will be offering a position to join the production team and be fully trained in the craft of pottery.

This will be a hands-on, three-year apprenticeship aimed at someone wanting to make a career in pottery. No prior pottery experience is required, but the ideal candidate will have an appreciation for craft, an eye for detail, and the patience required for repetitive tasks. The apprentice will be trained in the entire production process, from mixing clay to packing and shipping finished pots.

As a multigenerational St. Ives local, Callum acknowledges that "the opportunity to train in a professional pottery in my hometown changed the course of my life." Similarly, Driving Creek would love to find a Coromandel local for this position. While the apprenticeship will be open to all New Zealand residents, priority will be given to local applicants.

Applications close on 18th April – help us spread the word and start a new chapter of craft education in Aotearoa. For more information and to apply for the apprenticeship, search 'Driving Creek' on: seek.co.nz.

www.seek.co.nz/driving-creek-jobs?jobId=82363800&type=standard

Words by
Matilda Halley





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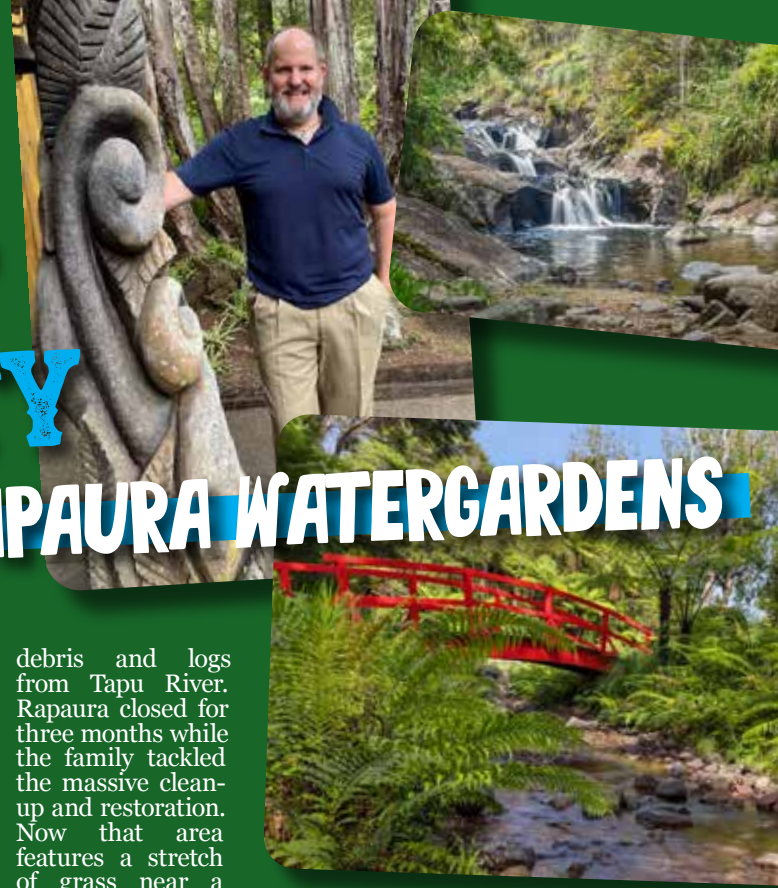
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SIXTY YEARS OF SERENITY

THE STORY BEHIND RAPAUWA WATERGARDENS



They say Coromandel is good for the soul and I reckon the lovely Rapauwa Watergardens at Tapu are good for the soul and the heart. With 64 acres (about 26 hectares) of native bush, lush gardens and delightful waterfalls, it's a welcoming haven for those needing rest or some space and time with nature.

It is currently managed by Sacha Sank with assistance from his sister Serena. They tell me about it as we wander through the grounds, a pleasant surprise around every corner and always the tantalising sound of cascading water. Sixty years ago this area in Tapu Valley was scrub and farmland when Fritz and Josephine Loennig bought it. With hard work and vision they gradually transformed it, harnessing the waters of nearby Tapu River. The couple created a garden now recognised as a 'Garden of National Significance' by New Zealand Gardens Trust, the only one on the Coromandel Peninsula. Then Peter and Shirley Lowes took over and enjoyed the property before selling it in 1994, thanks to a chance encounter.

This is where Sally Sank joins the story. Born and raised in Christchurch, Sally moved to Hong Kong, where she married and raised two children, Serena and Sacha. This remarkable woman had no commercial experience but plenty of ambition and creativity. She set up her first shop 'Hobby Horse' and then expanded until she had ten. Her children describe her fondly as "our glamorous entrepreneur mother". It was during a New Zealand holiday that Sally happened to pass Rapauwa Watergardens.

"She was on a mission to hug a kauri tree along the Coroglen road," smiles Sacha. "But as she passed Rapauwa, she felt an urge to explore it and turned into the gate. Mother told me she got goosebumps as she entered the gardens."

Excited with her discovery, Sally met the owners and promptly bought it. Then she put her passion and creativity into the property to make it something special.

In 2002, Sacha travelled from Hong Kong to New Zealand to help his mother run the watergardens. Soon afterwards, the Coromandel experienced a weather bomb that devastated the property with masses of

debris and logs from Tapu River. Rapauwa closed for three months while the family tackled the massive clean-up and restoration. Now that area features a stretch of grass near a majestic stand of kauri, rimu, totara and rewarewa – a perfect setting for wedding photographs. Beyond the trees one can spot the bush-clad heights of Maunapuaki.

When the business reopened in September 2002 it had a fresh look, including a large new reception/dining area. Sally died in 2023 and her family treasure the time they were together.

Clever design

Around every path at Rapauwa, there's a brook bursting with the vitality of life and I'm told it all flows through gravity. What clever design. It is obvious that the property's gardener, Ross, takes pride in his role.

You can spot native birds as well as native and exotic plants and quirky garden art amongst the greenery. There's plenty of opportunities to sit a while and absorb the aromas of nature and those wandering at dusk may discover glow-worms. With a touch of humour, there's a very high seat for 'tall poppies'! That was Sally's idea.

A lodge and a charming cottage offer comfortable accommodation, described in the visitors' book as 'absolute heaven'. Here Sally's influence lingers in dynamic artwork. As well as day visitors, Rapauwa welcomes groups, weddings and private functions.

As the family makes plans to move on, this property is now looking for a new guardian; could you be the next owner of this precious land?

Words by
Pamela Ferla

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ALTERNATIVE BEATS FROM THE PENINSULA

HAZY AND THE JAYS

Hazy and the Jays is a dynamic alternative pop/rock band based in Thames, New Zealand. The group features Izzy Fitzsimons on lead vocals, Harris Elliot-Hogg on guitar, Jacob Rush on bass, and Jacob 'Sticky' Wenhold on drums. Together, they craft a unique sound shaped by diverse musical influences.

Each member draws inspiration from a broad spectrum of artists:

Izzy Fitzsimons is influenced by Hozier, Led Zeppelin, Måneskin, Fleetwood Mac and Rainbow Kitten Surprise.

Jacob Rush finds his musical footing with Radiohead, Tame Impala, Laufey, Vulfpeck and Thundercat.

Harris Elliot-Hogg takes inspiration from Pearl Jam, Six60, Alice in Chains and Metallica.

Jacob 'Sticky' Wenhold is inspired by The Killers, Radiohead and The Smiths.

Your musical journey: How did you all meet and how did the band form?

We met at Thames High School during our prize-giving music practices at the end of 2023 where the idea of competing in Smokefreerockquest the following year with each other was proposed. The next year we competed and, after making it to our regional finals, we made the decision to stick together.

What gets your creative juices flowing? What inspires you to make music?

For us we love jamming and playing music – a lot of the time our songs merely started as jams. It's common to find us playing something completely new whilst we're meant to be practising our setlist because someone starts playing a riff and we all start jamming along to it.

The importance of live music: How has live music shaped your life and career?

The internet has been a blessing and a curse for small musicians. Your music may blow up overnight or you can spend years pushing your music to little response. Live music is great because it lets people see where the music comes from and there's no such thing as skipping a song if the intro isn't catchy enough. I think live music is really great for this and I would love to see some underground live performances and mini-festivals around the peninsula. A highlight of our time together as a band has definitely been the performance aspect. A good performance sets the tone for practices and gives us something to look forward to. And while not every gig goes smoothly, we've learnt to push past those difficult days and keep focused on why we love music.



What does being a musician here in Te Tara-o-te-ika-a-Māui (on the Peninsula) mean to you?

There is a great sense of community here on the Peninsula; it's great to have so many people around locally invested into music. It makes it much easier to find local events and gigs as, once you've done one, the connections quickly form. The weather is definitely helpful for outdoor live events as we've only had rain at one gig. It can be tricky to reach a wider audience when we're not too close to a city but as we move around the country we hope more opportunities will give us a bigger stage.

Youth in the Arts: What are the biggest challenges and rewards?

One of the best parts of being a youth in music is the music competitions that are available to us here in New Zealand such as Rockquest and Play it Strange. Another great aspect of being youth in the arts is the support! For us, we have some really awesome people to support us – CFM, Garden Music – and our lovely music teacher, Dr Voice, has really helped us grow! Some challenges of being youth in music include an occasional lack of respect due to our age, as well as there being a surprisingly high number of venues we actually can't play despite them very much being our type of vibe.

What's next? Any exciting plans or projects on the horizon?

Our drummer and bassist are off to Otago Uni this year but we're hoping to continue working together despite the separation. For those of us still at high school this year we hope to compete again at Rockquest this year in the solo/duo category in Hamilton. Otherwise, next you'll find Harris and Izzy alongside our '5th Beatle', Tamihana Timothy, at this year's 'A Taste of Matarangi' wine and music festival on 5th April.

Find and support: Where can we find your music, and how can people show their support?

Follow us on social media! See: @hazyandthejays on Facebook, Instagram and Youtube



Words by
Garden Music Thames



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WAKA AMA IN TE WHITIANGA-A-KUPE

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH THE WAI, EACH OTHER, AND KAUPAPA MĀORI

Did you spot Whitianga Waka Ama on the water this Waitangi Day? Our local club welcomed more than 40 new paddlers who took to the moana (ocean) for the first time as part of the Waitangi ki Whitianga celebration held at Buffalo Beach Reserve.

Waka Ama (outrigger canoeing) is a paddling sport with deep cultural and historical roots in Aotearoa and the Pacific. It involves paddling a waka (canoe) with an ama (outrigger) attached for stability. It is the fastest-growing water sport in Aotearoa, particularly in the Māori and Pasifika communities.

This is a kōrero (story) from passionate club members Mike Bennett (Club President) and Natalie Jones (Club Secretary) who are dedicated to connecting kaihoe (paddlers) with the wai (water), each other, and kaupapa Māori (purpose).

Waka Ama in Te Whitianga-a-Kupe

Waka Ama caters to all levels – from beginners looking to experience their first paddle to seasoned paddlers training for races. We currently operate from Tarapatiki Stream, with club sessions on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings.

We aim to build a strong community of experienced, confident kaihoe who feel connected to the sport and its traditions.

Paddle Etiquette Tip #1

When holding your hoe (paddle) on land, always rest the handle on the ground rather than leaning on the blade—this helps prevent damage and keeps your paddle in top condition!

Whitianga Hosted the Long-Distance Nationals

“We never thought it would come to us.” – Mike Bennett

Hosting the Long-Distance Nationals in April 2023 was a milestone moment for Whitianga Waka Ama, marking the first time Hauraki hosted this event. With just four months to plan for 2000-3000 attendees, safety and logistics were key.

Our club's strong connections with Surf Life Saving and Coastguard ensured a solid safety plan. Four local Coromandel clubs (Whitianga Waka Ama, Te Whānau Waka Ama o Whangamatā, Hauraki Waka Ama, and Te Aputa Tira Hoe with support

from Te Puku o Te Ika) united to deliver the event despite fierce winds and shifting conditions. One kaihoe was blown a kilometre off course but safely rescued. The course had to be revised mid-event, showcasing the resilience and adaptability of the kaihoe and organisers alike.

Whitianga Waka Ama will never run a sanctioned event without the incredible support of Coast Guard and Surf Life Saving. Their dedication and expertise, alongside our volunteers, made this event not only possible but a massive success.

Looking Ahead

The Long-Distance Nationals put Whitianga firmly on the map for waka ama in Aotearoa. With competitors ranging from 14 years old to paddlers in their 70s, this sport truly is for everyone. Could it be for you?


If you'd like to give waka ama a go, join the Whitianga Waka Ama Facebook page or email: wakawhiti@gmail.com

Te Whitianga-a-Kupe is a place of deep historical and cultural significance. In Part Two of this series, we'll explore the traditions of waka ama and its rich history – stay tuned!



Words by
**Mike Bennett
& Natalie Jones**






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