

# COROMIND

Issue 37

## Play is the Way

Blue Hair, Bare Feet, and the Joy of Not Growing Up!

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## THE THAMES ARTIST WHO DREAMED IN COLOUR

Rhona Haszard: A Bright Star that Burned Too Soon

On Air



Watch & Listen



# Thank Goodness for Coromind!

Kia ora koutou to the readers and supporters of Coromind, to those featured on its pages, and to everyone who loves the Hauraki-Coromandel.

Hauraki-Coromandel is a place of rich hidden histories that sit just beneath the golden beaches and abundant ngahere (native bush). It is somewhere that for the last 50+ years has offered artists and creatives a welcoming place to live and make their art. In the 21st century, these creatives are now able to use local publications such as Coromind as a means to keep this art scene not just alive but thriving.

Living in Hauraki-Coromandel enables a freedom of mind and expression that is not possible to tap into in a city. While tangata whenua (indigenous people) have history here that reached deep back into the whenua (land) before the white sails of the colonisers appeared on the horizon, more recently in the 20th century the area became for Pākehā (new settlers) a place to try a different way of living.

Early Māori landed in the region around 1250 AD to a resource-rich peninsula. While in Whitianga and Thames you may see plaques denoting things of historical note, there is a trove of history that predates these commemorative metal plates. Pā sites with still visible palisades can be found all over the peninsula, and each new subdivision unearths artefacts from the early days of this land's first inhabitants. On Robinson Rd in Whitianga, a stone store built in the 1860s has signage next to it, explaining its heritage. Behind the stone store sits Toumuia – known locally as Lovers Rock – which was the site of a battle with a raiding party from Ngapuhi so bloody the river ran red with the blood of a number of iwi. Only the stone store shows any evidence of historical importance to a casual observer.

In more recent history – a century after settlers had milked the peninsula of kauri and gold, leaving still visible scars – in the 1970s came an art rush as city-dwellers seeking a different kind of life flocked to the area, drawn by the beauty of the beaches and bush and the freedom that living far from the city allowed.

While the population of the peninsula has swelled, most visibly since 2020, you could still hit an artist with a pāua (abalone) shell if you threw it pretty much anywhere on the Coromandel. Throw a kina (sea urchin) and you'll likely hit an exhibition or festival – the art scene in the area continues to blossom and grow.

There are so many stories to be told, so much art to be made and shared. Local publications like Coromind are the key to ensuring these hidden stories see the light and allow creatives from all mediums a place to showcase their art and connect with other artists.

We are so lucky to have the crew from Coromind who not only shine a light on untold stories but who also tautoko (support) so many artists on the peninsula. You can feel the passion and enthusiasm practically buzzing out of Leo and Taylor and this excitement carries through to everything they do. The peninsula would be a much more boring place without you, Coromind, so thank you for all that you do!

 Words by  
**Roimata Taimana and Carolyn Wadey-Barron**



# Less Competition, More Collaboration

## *The Projects we were part of in 2025*

This issue of Coromind marks the beginning of our fourth year. Still young, still energetic and proudly community-driven, Coromind has grown into a platform that brings joy, connection and positive stories to our region and beyond.

More than a colourful and educational magazine, Coromind is a growing outlet committed to shining a light on the very best of the Hauraki-Coromandel. Here are some of the initiatives we brought to life through Coromind in 2025.



### Coromind ArtWorks:

A pop-up art gallery in the heart of Whitianga that brought together live music (on a SHURE-powered stage), five collaborative exhibitions with outstanding local artists, workshops, live art, and a big opening-night celebration for each show.



### The Art of Being an Artist workshop series:

Four free workshops for local artists and creatives, held at Whitianga Community Services, focusing on self-promotion, confidence, creative growth, and the business side of the arts..



### Mercury Bay Performing Arts:

Our partnership with one of the coolest performing arts groups in Aotearoa continues to grow. After eight sold-out shows of *Aladdin Jr.* in 2025, involving more than 50 local tamariki, we'll be back in 2026 with *Beauty and the Beast Jr.*



### Sunrise & Soul Market:

An arts and crafts market that brought together a strong line-up of creative stalls, free workshops, live music, and great food.



### Three Fried Bread and a Doughnut:

Three unapologetically Māori voices – Jason Tahatika, Roimata Taimana, and Walter Baker – brought bold, powerful artwork to Kūaotunu in a special Matariki exhibition supported by Coromind.



### Politics and youth voice:

Our young reporter Sam Ribet (19) interviewed TCDC mayoral candidates, asking questions submitted by rangatahi. We also covered Meet the Candidates and the Māori Wards kōrero with Andrew Judd and Dale-Maree Morgan in Whitianga.



### 48 Hours Film Challenge:

Coromind proudly sponsored Golden Ratio, a team of Thames High School students who produced the short film *Thirst* for the nationally acclaimed competition.



### Coromandel Open Arts Studios:

Coromind became a partner of this much-loved arts tour, which saw record numbers in its most recent event.



**Events ... plenty of them:** Coromind actively supports local arts and community initiatives, and in 2025 we were involved in many events across the Hauraki-Coromandel, including Waitangi ki Whitianga, Coro Summer Fest, Coro Classic, Moments... Where Sultry Jazz Meets Blues and Swing, Ahi Kaa Exhibition at Driving Creek, Mother's Day Sip & Paint at Coroglen, Coro Cine Film Festival at the Mercury Twin Cinemas, the Corrosive Moses Single Release Party at the Whitianga Town Hall, and more.

We focus on the positive, the half-full cup, and the bright side. That approach has built a loyal readership and attracted generous sponsors and advertisers. We appreciate you all.

If you'd like to support Coromind and help us continue this mahi, visit [coromind.nz/signup](http://coromind.nz/signup) and become a member. Small contributions make a big difference.

Now, enjoy another beautiful issue of Coromind.

Peace.



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# THE ULTIMATE COROMANDEL GIG GUIDE

Coromind now brings gigs and events from across the region into one place – powered by Eventfinda. From live music and exhibitions to festivals and community gatherings, our guide at Coromind.nz helps you stay in the loop.

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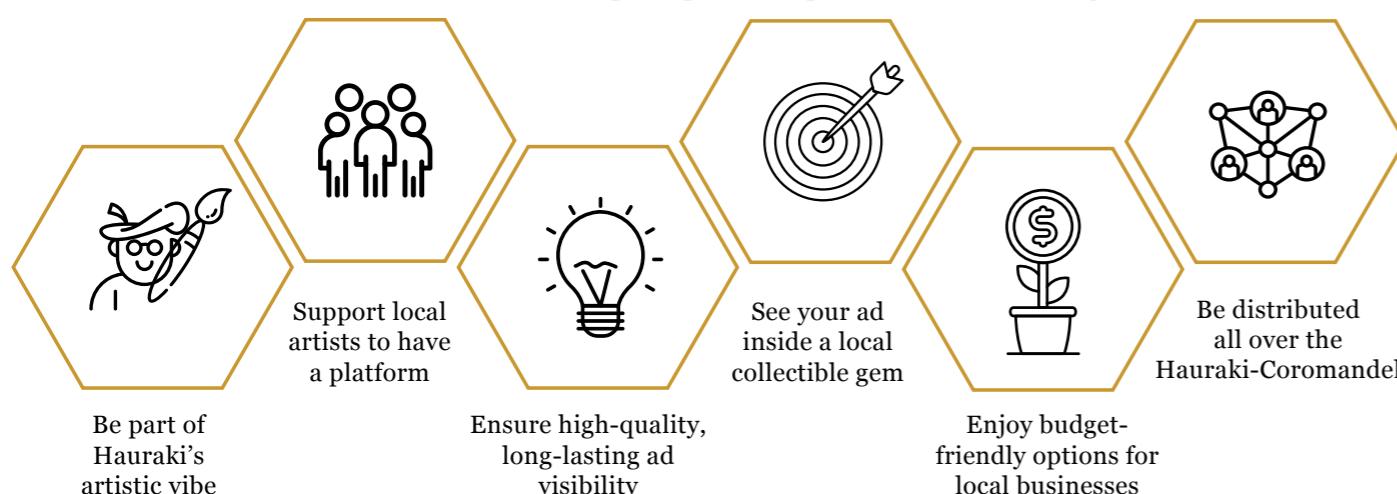


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# Richard Macdonald

My childhood laid the groundwork for where I'm at as an artist, as I often found myself either drawing, reading or constructing something while dealing with an on again/off again disability.

Life prodded me in this direction, and a subliminal need to gain some control surfaced in the form of my art. And well, it's kind of cool when you find your niche. More than a decade of summers spent at Hahei in my youth stirred a love of the sea and the natural world generally, and there has always been an inner compulsion to create. That compulsion inevitably draws upon one's psyche, making its presence felt in the bones of a work. Exhibiting that work is a little like laying one's soul bare and putting it up for sale ... but you hope someone will get it' and preferably want to take it home with them, though sometimes you just don't want to let it go either. I'm a bit of a stickler for detail, and that's where you'll find much of my effort, not only in the execution, but also in the ideas behind the piece. The creative process is something continuing and compelling and I've a list of ideas which in all likelihood I'll never, ever manage to complete.

From purely representational oil paintings mostly comprising birds, I've increasingly begun to include symbolic elements in my work, so a piece can operate on multiple levels and have a narrative, evoke memories, or even have a bit of fun, rather than be a purely aesthetic device.

Flight, faith, symbolism, surrealism, Kiwiana and a long time fascination with East Asian art ... all these ingredients and more find their way into the blend in one way or another.

And because frankly sometimes I want a break from just painting, I've given in to the urge to rework our iconic 'national toy' with an ongoing Buzzy Bee series referencing popular culture and skirting the fringes of the designer toy movement ... sort of. Lots of practical challenges, frustrations and fun for myself therein. Examples of these were selected as finalists in both the 2018 and 2020 Miles Art Awards at the Tauranga Art Gallery, another also winning its category at Art Waikino in 2024, where I also won the 'supreme award' in 2009 for my painting 'Fruit Flies'.

Along my journey I've created small murals, worked as an upholsterer, an art school technician and studied decorative paint finishes (Unitec), graphic design and contextual studies (MIT). Finding a personal style wasn't something I ever thought about consciously ... it fortuitously just 'happened' at some point and I've no doubt it'll develop/mutate further. A small selection of my work and prints can be found at Waihi Beach Gallery. I've also exhibited with Inspirit Gallery (Tamahere) and Zeayou Gallery (Taupo).

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Facebook: Richard Macdonald Artist

Words by  
**Richard Macdonald**



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# Wondering in Waikino

*Don't just do something ... Sit there*

Most of us would be familiar with the sayings, 'Don't just sit there, do something!', or 'Idle hands are the Devil's workshop', a slightly more sinister version. Both imply that inaction usually results in loss or lack of reward. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Or 'Build it, and they will come'? They both suggest we get up out of our seats and be productive with our time rather than sit still. Even the sports brand Nike's slogan is – Just Do It. This seems to be excellent advice for most life situations, as inaction is often not the foremost companion of success. However, there is always more than one way to perceive a situation or circumstance. Let's delve, then.

Inaction may also represent a different scenario, suggesting contemplation and perhaps caution. In 1704, the English poet Alexander Pope targeted the literary critics of his day with an essay on criticism, and he finished up with the phrase, 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' Subsequently, many others in literature and song have echoed this phrase, such as Thomas Hardy, James Joyce, EM Forster, and Frank Sinatra. I suppose the phrase 'Learn to be still' follows in parallel. Precipitous, hasty decisions or actions tend to favour mistakes and misfortune. But perhaps there is a middle path, one that encourages thinking, planning, structuring, coordinating and dreaming but without a computer, phone, book or even a pen or pencil. An approach that allows us to 'feel' the situation before 'doing' it. That takes a certain stillness.

In this state, we may appear to be idle; our eyes may even be closed, yet we are not asleep, inactive or lazy. We are in fact meditating, contemplating, inventing, creating, theorising and imagining. We surrender to the stillness and alignment to lead the way. We may measure thrice and cut once. But there comes a time when we must draw the line and commit to physical action. When do we decide what move to make, which person to call, which initiative to follow

or how much time and money to invest? Ideas are free, and they are like noses. Everyone has one. But ideas never materialise on their own; they must be executed, experimented with and materialised. So, what transforms an idea into a reality? The line is blurred, making it all one big, fantastic adventure.

One suggestion is known as Ockham's Razor and credited to William of Ockham, an academic philosopher and theologian. He stated that, "Among competing hypotheses that predict equally well, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected". Deepak Chopra's fourth spiritual law of success similarly echoes the principle of "Do less, and accomplish more." It is based on the idea that nature's intelligence functions with effortless ease, with carelessness, harmony and love. Even Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher, and author of the Tao Te Ching, said "An integral being knows without going, sees without looking, and accomplishes without doing."

So we could run around constantly busy, multi-tasking and conjuring to arrive at the finish line, or we could sit around meditating and dreaming for days, hoping it will manifest on its own. Do we work hard or smart, or is it a combination? As much as we may believe in spontaneity, organising rather than agonising seems to be a very valid approach. Or do we add madness to method versus adding method to madness? It reminds me of a phrase most commonly associated with Sylvia Boorstein. She captures the essence of it all quite well, and although it sounds simple, it isn't as easy to do as it seems. Is it the 'unbearable lightness of being'? Or simply, as she stated: Don't just do something ... sit there!

Words by  
**Amir Yussof**

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# A HOME FOR HAURAKI-COROMANDEL HISTORY

## How The Treasury is Safeguarding our Past



To sum up, a few of the great reasons why you should visit The Treasury, in Thames:

If you have an interest in finding out more about local family or local history, The Treasury Reading Room is open from 11-3pm Wednesday to Saturday. Our Reading Room Team can help set you up in the right direction to find out more information on your chosen subject and ... who knows what you might find?

If you have precious family or local history records and photos you would like to have stored in the best possible conditions, please email to book an appointment to visit us at [kiaora@thetreasury.org.nz](mailto:kiaora@thetreasury.org.nz) and we will show you through.

If you have artifacts you want safely stored – we're not the place for that but we can advise you of your local museum who can attend to this area of heritage activities.

If you can support us, either as a volunteer, member or with a financial donation, please contact us – it all helps!

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Summer is a great time for a clean-up of the family home or the holiday home. If you're looking for somewhere to safely store photos and documents of local or family interest, The Treasury, in Thames, a charitable trust run by The Coromandel Heritage Trust (2004), is the only purpose built, temperature and humidity regulated, regionwide facility that houses and makes accessible paper-based historical documents of the Hauraki/Coromandel area.

The Treasury is housed within two buildings side by side at 705 Queen Street, Thames, each imposing in their own way and completely juxtaposed architecturally. The Thames Carnegie Library, built in 1905, was refurbished by the council in 2007 and reopened as The Treasury in 2009. Alongside it, the Archive is a bespoke designed, award-winning state of the art facility, stark in its architecture, which respectfully and artistically interprets aspects of the Carnegie Library design.

Founder, and patron, Geraldine Dunwoodie says, 'It has been a team effort from day one, and we're very lucky to have some of the original volunteers who started this journey still working with us today. Their cumulative knowledge of the contents of The Treasury is amazing, and different for each of us depending on our local interests, and the research we have each contributed to The Treasury. I value their input hugely and without them, we wouldn't still be here doing this 20 years later. There is a huge amount of information about The Treasury, and our collections, on the website, but the best way to find out what we have here is to come in and see for yourself. With a bit of time and effort, everyone who visits finds a person or a place they have a connection to in the pages here. The Treasury is our history, and our people.'

The collections consist of maps, family documents, business records, photos and published books, and acknowledgement is made of the presence of Māori on the land in the centuries before the arrival of Europeans. Our collection of interesting data about the pre-European days is growing. From the 1800s onwards, we have records of the gold miners, kauri millers and gum diggers, fishermen, farmers, industrialists, entrepreneurs and townspeople who inhabited all the settlements around the Coromandel/Hauraki.

And while it's difficult to decipher the difference sometimes, our publications 'True Tales' of the Coromandel/Hauraki area are true 'according to the author'. The Coromandel Heritage Trust (TCHT) states it accepts 'the material supplied by our contributors in good faith. The details are valid as the writers recall them'.

The 'True Tales' books are a truly collaborative and community effort. From the foreword of the 'True Tales of Thames' (2016), as written by one of the founders, the late Morrie Dunwoodie, then chair of the TCHT, "... A lot of work goes into preparing a book like this and finding the funds to print it. The format of this book follows the parameters set out by The Coromandel Town History Research Group who first thought of the idea of 'True Tales'. They printed the first three very successful True Tales books, about Northern Coromandel. Their wish was to see 'True Tales' spread around New Zealand ... These books tell stories which don't get into the history books or newspapers and would otherwise be lost to future generations."

Words by  
**Anna Dunwoodie**

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MILLY MOON AND THE SPACES BETWEEN SERIES

# Play is the Way

Blue hair, bare feet, and  
the joy of not growing up!



At 36 years old, I am still regularly asked for ID when trying to purchase a bottle of my favourite Shiraz-Viognier at the local supermarket. This isn't a brag – more than once, I've smiled at the request, only to be told "Not to worry, actually". My wrinkles, you see, are suddenly very visible and the mistake is realised.

I have blue hair and silly tattoos. I shy away from the structured and muted tones 'adult attire' of many of my fellow millennials, opting instead for rose-pink sunglasses, crochet capes and clashing patterns.

Aside from my aesthetic however, I think I am more often mistaken as younger than my years because of how I play. When the moon is full I howl, when it rains I splash barefoot in the puddles, when a song in my headphones hits just right, I dance as I walk along a public street. When the desire to jump in te awa (the river) takes hold, I jump in, regardless of whether I'm carrying togs or towel, and when the autumn leaves have fallen and gathered, I lie down on the earth tossing them about for the simple joy of it. I don't care what you think of me.

You may be familiar, dear reader, with the famous quote from Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing." I, for one, believe it.

For over a decade, I have written and presented programmes for the early education sector in Aotearoa and Australia. In this work, I have experienced first-hand the benefit of child-led and play-based learning. When tamariki (children) are given permission to play in their learning space, the cognitive benefits, social emotional regulation, and language development are expansive. As an artist, I have found the more I engage authentically in play-based learning alongside or inspired by tamariki, the more comprehensively and authentically I engage with my art and my everyday world.

I have written previously about the necessity of the artist and so quote author Roger von Oech, "Necessity may be the mother of invention, but play is certainly the father."

There is something untouchable in the release experienced when I give myself permission to play and work with children continues to remind me to embrace my inner child in all areas of life. I have received the purest compliments and the most devastating insults from a child and working alongside tamariki has definitely unlocked in my art, an egolessness and an ability when performing to be here, now.

Deep grief is another experience through which I've learned the importance of play. My art is so informed by my emotional state, as I'm sure many readers will relate to. In grief, there is a place I've come to multiple times where I realise I've neglected play, so I push myself to create something or action something playful, dark often, accompanied by sobbing maybe, but playful nonetheless. A throw-paint-at-a-door-angrily exercise, or getting mucky in rain-drenched sand, or perhaps a lonely somatic dance shaking out all the shapes of my grief.

The poet Diane Ackerman said, "Play is our brain's favorite way of learning", so in joy or sadness I uphold a sense of playfulness in my everyday life and well, dear readers, I highly recommend it.

Let's give ourselves permission, amidst the responsibility of serious adult existence, to release social expectation, give no f\*#ks and feed your inner artist with exploration, experimentation and maybe, next time you see a blue-haired madwoman throwing autumn leaves about at the park, go join her.

I run interactive storytelling sessions for children and whānau in Waihi and surrounds. These are play-based educational programmes designed to be intergenerationally interactive. Find me here and touch base for party event or session info: [https://www.instagram.com/little\\_raconteurs](https://www.instagram.com/little_raconteurs)

Words by  
**Milly Moon**



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# Marine Mammals of Tikapa Moana

## Boating with Care

Summer brings more people onto Tikapa Moana / the Hauraki Gulf, one of Aotearoa's richest marine habitats. The Gulf has high species diversity, with year-round populations of Bryde's whales (tohorā), common dolphins (aihe), bottlenose dolphins (tereahu), and fur seals (kekeno). There are also regular sightings of killer whales (maki), false killer whales, and long-finned pilot whales (ūpokohue), along with occasional visits from other baleen whales (tohorā) and beaked whales. In total, around 25 marine mammal species have been recorded here.

For many boaters, these encounters are unforgettable. By practising nature – enjoying and caring for nature in ways that keep it healthy – we can all help these marine mammals thrive. Marine mammals need space to rest, feed, and care for their young.

"When you're within 300 metres of whales or dolphins, slow to idle speed and give them plenty of room," says Marie Everth, DOC Marine Reserves Ranger. "A little space makes a big difference to their wellbeing. People don't always realise how much disturbance fast boats or loud engines can cause."

- Keep 50 metres away – more for mothers and calves.
- Approach only from behind or the side.
- Avoid loud noise, sudden movements, or circling animals. Leave the area if they show signs of disturbance.
- Limit to three vessels (including aircraft/drones) within 300 metres.
- Keep drones and aircraft at least 150 metres away and avoid flying or casting a shadow directly over the animals.

"Most boaters want to do the right thing," Marie says. "Once they know the rules, they're happy to follow them."

DOC is the lead agency for responding to sick, injured, or stranded marine mammals. If you find a whale, dolphin, or seal that is distressed, entangled, stranded, or dead, call 0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468) immediately. The location of the marine



### Spot a whale or dolphin?

"Report it using the SeaSpotter app! Every sighting helps scientists track population sizes, breeding rates, and movement patterns – vital for protecting these species," says Marie.

mammal, along with photos and videos, if possible, is also helpful for the rangers who are responding.

Strandings are managed through a structured response that prioritises animal welfare and public safety. DOC teams work alongside trained volunteers – such as Project Jonah – and local iwi to stabilise, assess, and, where possible, refloat the animals, while ensuring the process respects cultural values and tikanga.

"The best help you can give is phoning us straight away," Marie says. "A quick call gives the animal its best chance."

For local operators, DOC offers SMART (Sustainable Marine Mammal Actions in Recreational Tourism) training in Whitianga for commercial tourism operators and marine industry staff.

"SMART gives professionals the guidance they need to operate safely around marine mammals," says Marie.

By slowing down on the water and giving wildlife space, you help protect the dolphins, whales, and seals that make Tikapa Moana / the Hauraki Gulf so special.

**For more information, head to:**  
[www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/marine-mammals/sharing-our-coasts-with-marine-mammals/](http://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/marine-mammals/sharing-our-coasts-with-marine-mammals/)

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Authorised by Miriam Ross, Level 5, 108, The Terrace, Wellington.

# Home in the Coromandel

## SMALL SWAPS, BIG CHANGE FOR OUR MOANA

There's something about the Coromandel that stays with you.

Maybe it's the way the bush runs all the way down to the sea, or how a sunset turns the sky gold. Maybe it's the people – because every voice here adds colour to the bigger story of our place.

But what makes this place truly special isn't just the scenery. It's the responsibility we all share to look after it.

As a Coastal Kaitiaki, I see first-hand how much the ocean gives us – and how much it struggles under the weight of waste. Every summer, tonnes of single-use plastic end up on our beaches and in our moana. New Zealand alone sends around 252,000 tonnes of plastic to landfill each year. Although plastic only makes up about 8% of our waste by weight, it bulks out to occupy around 20% of landfill space. And because plastic doesn't break down, much of it ends up spilling into the environment.

That's why I started Coromandel Cold.

We've created New Zealand's first 3 kg bag of reusable ice, designed to look and feel like a traditional bag of party or salt ice – but with a huge difference. Coromandel Cold ice bags can be reused up to 1,000 times. Across its lifetime, just one bag saves around 46 kg of single-use plastic from heading to landfill.

Instead of ripping and tossing another plastic bag after a weekend, you've got something sturdy, reliable, and built to last. Multiply that across hundreds of fishers, campers, and families over the summer, and suddenly we're cutting out thousands of single-use bags from our waste stream.

It's easy to think small actions don't matter – but they do. Studies show that less than 10% of plastic produced globally is recycled, and if business as usual continues, plastic waste is projected to nearly triple by 2060. So every choice we make – from picking up rubbish on a walk, to saying no to extra packaging, to swapping to reusable products – really does send a message: I care about this place.

And when enough of us make those choices, we see real change. Cleaner beaches. Safer oceans. A better summer for everyone.

I'm 19, and I'm learning as I go – but one thing I've already learned is that passion matters more than perfection. You don't have to be an expert or get everything right. You just have to start.

So, this summer, when you're loading the chilly bin, heading out fishing, or packing for a beach day, think about the small swaps that add up to something big. Together, we can keep the Coromandel the kind of place we're proud to call home.

You can find Coromandel Cold at Whitianga Fine Wines & Spirits, The Bottle-O Whitianga Liquor Store, Liquorland Whitianga, Kūaotunu Store, The Pour House in Hahei and Coromandel Fish Dive & Hunt in Coro Town.

- Even though plastic is only about 8% of our rubbish by weight, it takes up nearly a fifth of our landfill space because it's so bulky. Plastic recovered from coastlines is difficult to recycle as it is often brittle and partly broken down.

- Every year, New Zealanders throw away about 252,000 tonnes of plastic – most of it never gets recycled.

- Tiny plastic fragments, called microplastics, are showing up on beaches across New Zealand. Most are so small you can't even see them.

- In Auckland, scientists have found microplastics on the coast at levels up to 50 times higher than older studies thought.

- Plastic is the most common litter on Kiwi beaches – and it's been found inside fish, shellfish, and seabirds.

- It's not just wildlife that suffers: plastic pollution can spoil the look of our favourite beaches and put a dent in tourism and community pride.

Words by  
**Roman Carley**  
Coastal Kaitiaki & Founder,  
Coromandel Cold



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Have you discovered the underwater world of the Coromandel? Dive Zone Whitianga are the local diving experts and they reckon the diving here is simply world class. There are literally hundreds of dive sites for all levels of diver to explore in the region.

Dive Zone Whitianga reckons you are spoilt for choice diving the many offshore islands from the Mercury group and down to the Alderman Islands and along the stunning coast in between. Prolific fish life and incredible structure both above and below make for an awesome day on the water. Close to the township of Whitianga, it is an easy run to the newly expanded Cathedral Cove (Te Whanganui A Hei) Marine Reserve with its rich and prolific sea life, some of which are not afraid to get up close and personal with divers. Regular visiting dolphins, a resident seal colony and the occasional orca make for some fantastic sea mammal encounters too.

Above water, the islands' spectacular cliffs climb vertically from the sea,

remnants of an ancient volcano chain that make many fascinating dive sites that vary in depth and bottom topography. In some places, the cliffs continue straight down beneath the water. And some of the walls display brilliant anemones, hydroids, nudibranchs, soft colourful sponges and spiny sea urchins.

Most dive sites are populated with great and small boulders, cracks and crevasses, swim throughs, and caves. Kelp and seaweeds of many colours spread over the sea floor. The fish life is many and hugely varied, from schools of trevally and blue maomao to large kingfish during summer months.

The Dive Zone Whitianga team are your local experts and are always keen to share what they know, fill your tanks and service your gear. And if you need to hire gear or purchase any new dive gear, then make sure you check out the huge quality range in store on Campbell Street.

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# THE THAMES ARTIST WHO DREAMED IN COLOUR

## RHONA HASZARD: A BRIGHT STAR THAT BURNED TOO SOON

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” Pablo Picasso

A child of Thames, Alice Gwendoline Haszard, known as Rhona, remained an artist throughout her childhood and into adulthood – a short life however, that ended tragically at the age of 30 years. Rhona was born at Pārāwai, Thames on 21 January 1901, the daughter of Alice Elizabeth Vaughan Haszard, née Wily, and Henry Douglas Morpeth Haszard. (1) Henry had a long and distinguished career in the Department of Lands and Survey, until his retirement in March 1921.

Rhona showed artistic talent from a young age. As a result of her father’s job, the family moved often, and during their time in Hokitika, Rhona was a pupil of artist Hugh Scott. The family then moved to Invercargill, where Rhona attended Southland Girls’ High School. Her mother died in November 1918, at the age of 53 years. The following year the family moved to Christchurch, and from mid-1919 Rhona studied at Canterbury College School of Art, now Ilam School of Fine Arts, where she joined an illustrious group of women artists. In 1921 at the age of 20 she became a member of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, and the following year exhibited with the Canterbury and Auckland art societies. Rhona was considered “one of the most spirited and promising of the Canterbury students.” (2)

In late December 1922, Rhona married Ronald James McKenzie, a fellow student and part-time tutor. (3) They divorced three years later in 1925. Rhona became romantically involved with an ex-army officer, Leslie Greener, and they married in Waihi, on 21 December 1925. (4) In 1926 they travelled to the Channel Islands, where Leslie’s parents lived, and then to France, where Rhona studied for a time at the Academie Julian in Paris. It was during this period that her work developed maturity, and a Post-Impressionist style. This style of painting developed from a predominantly French art movement that encouraged vivid colour to enhance emotional impact, distinctive brush strokes, geometric forms, and a move away from strict realism. Vincent van Gogh, Georges Seurat, and Pablo Picasso were famous post-impressionists. In 1927 Rhona and Leslie moved

to Egypt, where he had accepted a job at Victoria College, Alexandria, tutoring in art and French. (5)

On 16 February 1929, an article in the *Hokitika Guardian* noted that Miss Rhona Haszard (Mrs Leslie Greener) had held an exhibition of her paintings in December 1928, at Claridge’s Hotel, Alexandria. (6) The article acknowledged her ‘artistic maturity’. Her paintings were landscapes depicting scenes from New Zealand, Brittany, Sark, France and Egypt.

Rhona also became adept at the new graphic process of linocut printing, and held a joint exhibition with Leslie at the Gallery Paul in Cairo, March 1930. Back in New Zealand, the *Thames Star*, 3 July 1930, noted that Mrs Greener had received an invitation on behalf of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to contribute to an exhibition in aid of the British Legion, in the Grafton Gallery, London, 1 June 1931. The letter stipulated that only prominent artists were to be invited to contribute, and that Rhona’s work would be representative of the best in modern art. (7)

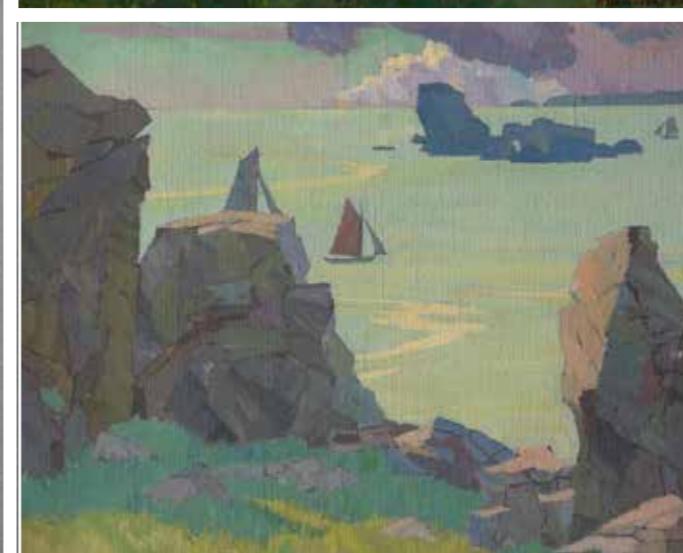
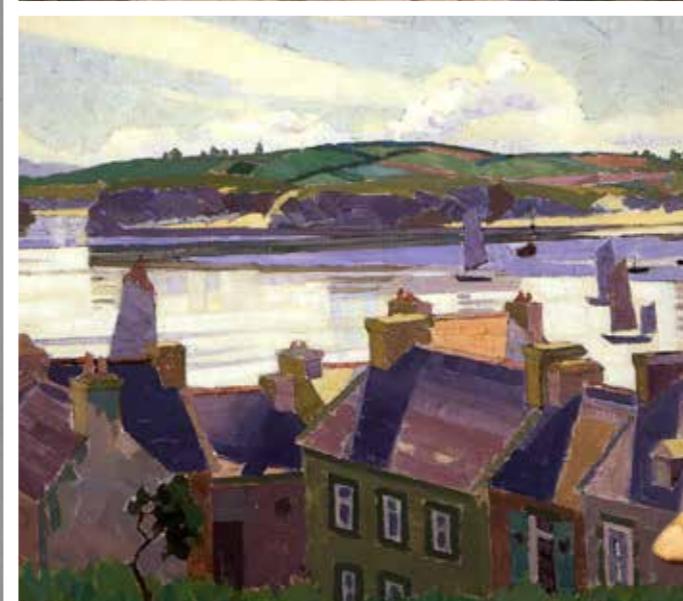
At the age of 30 years, Rhona sadly fell to her death from the Victoria College Tower, where she and her husband lived. She had been sketching in the tower the night following the opening of her last exhibition. (8) Two years after Rhona’s death, an exhibition collated by her husband toured New Zealand galleries. The exhibition confirmed her place in the art history of New Zealand. The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa classifies Rhona Haszard as one of a number of ex-patriot women artists whose work significantly influenced the visual arts in New Zealand in the first part of the twentieth century. (9)

A bright star in the world of art – another famous Thames woman, who went on to capture the hearts of many, and contribute to the enrichment of the human experience.



Words by  
**Robyn Pearce**

Volunteer, Thames Museum Te Whare Taonga o te Kauaeranga



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# Sunflower Glass Studio NZ Celebrates Aotearoa

## *Growing Seeds and Blooming in Kiwiana*



From the shimmering coastline of Mercury Bay to bustling markets in Whitianga and Coroglen, Sunflower Glass Studio NZ has been steadily evolving into an example of creativity, fun and happy memories, and New Zealand pride. What began as a heartfelt journey of remembrance has bloomed into a vibrant practice that celebrates enjoyment, personal stories and the wider cultural heritage of Aotearoa.

### Growing as Artists

Over the past few years, Sandra and Mark have deepened their craft, moving beyond the normal into a broader artistic vision. Their glasswork now reflects not only technical mastery – kilnforming, framework, and the delicate use of Italian Murano glass – but also a commitment to storytelling through Funky Fish, native birds, coastal topics, and playful Kiwiana themes.

**“Encased in Italian glass, each memory orb carries a loved one’s story and journey.”**

Alongside their playful Kiwiana pieces, they craft memory orbs: luminous spheres of Italian glass that encase the ashes of loved ones, whether human or pet. Each orb becomes a holder of story and journey, feeling light and remembrance in a way that words often cannot.

Each piece carries a spark of identity, laughter and a reminder that art can be fun, personal and proudly local.

### NZ Themes & Kiwiana Focus

The studio’s shift toward NZ themes has been a journey. By embracing Kiwiana – those uniquely New Zealand icons that stir remembrance and happiness – Sunflower Glass Studio NZ has found a way to connect with audiences across generations. From Funky Fish pocket-hugs, magnets and sand beads, kiwis to whimsical mushroom scenes and turtle sculptures, their work now sits firmly within the cultural fabric of Aotearoa. It’s art that feels familiar yet fresh, established in place yet open to imagination.

### Glass Workshops

Sharing knowledge has become central to the Sunflower Glass Studio NZ’s objective. Their glass workshops invite adults and children – locals and visitors alike – to step into the magic of fusing glass in kilns and watching flame demonstrations, shaping their own keepsakes while learning the patience

and playfulness of the craft. These sessions are more than lessons; they are experiences of connection, where creativity is nurtured and stories are exchanged.

### Markets & Community

Sunflower Glass Studio NZ’s presence at Whitianga and Coroglen markets has brought their work into the heart of community life. Market days are filled with conversations, laughter, and the joy of seeing art find its way into homes. Each stall is a miniature gallery, showcasing the studio’s evolving range and reminding passers-by that handmade treasures carry a warmth no factory can replicate.

### Mercury Bay Art Escape 2026

Looking ahead, the studio is proud to be part of the Mercury Bay Art Escape 2026, a celebration of creativity across the region. This event will see Sunflower Glass Studio NZ open its doors to visitors the first two weekends in March, offering a glimpse into the processes, inspirations, and stories behind the glass. It’s an opportunity to stand alongside fellow artists, to honour the collective spirit of Mercury Bay, and to share the studio’s journey with a wider audience.

As Sunflower Glass Studio steps into 2026, its path is clear: to continue growing as artists, to honour the spirit of NZ Made, and to celebrate Kiwiana in all its playful, heartfelt forms. Whether through workshops, markets, or Mercury Bay Art Escape, Sandra and Mark’s work reminds us that glass is more than material – it is memory, fun, culture, and connection, captured in light.

Find out more about Sunflower Glass Studio NZ at:  
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Words by  
**Mark and Sandra Hosking**

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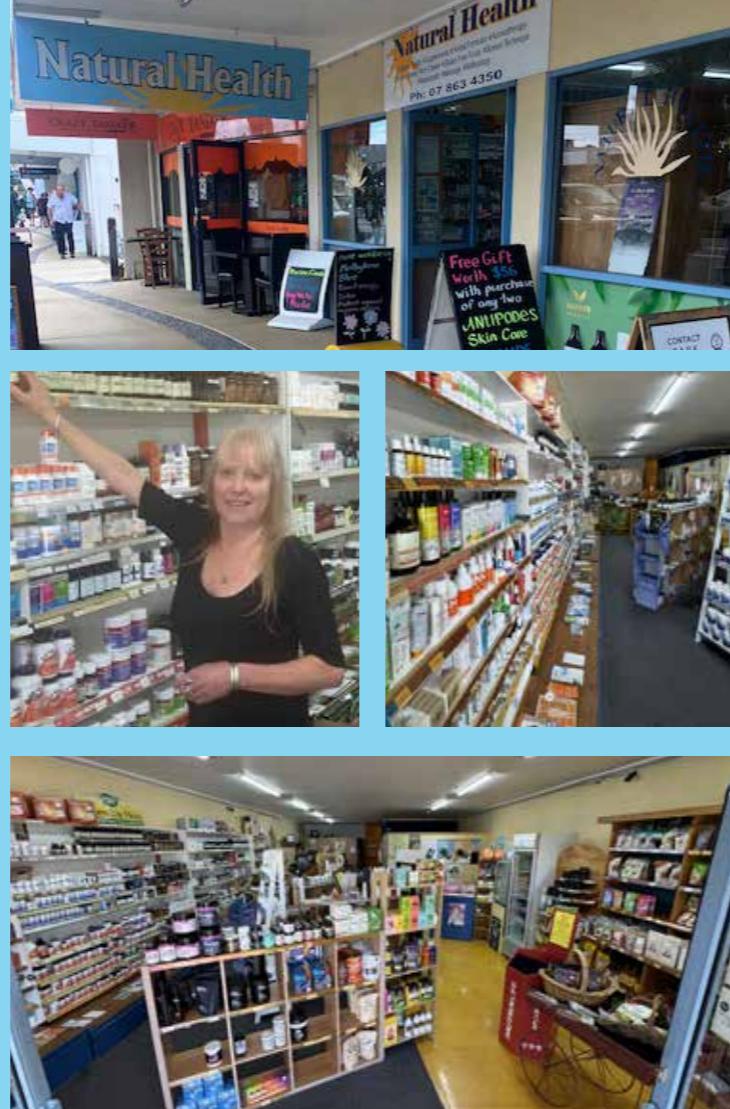
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Check the rules before you go at

[biosecurity.govt.nz/caulerpa](http://biosecurity.govt.nz/caulerpa)

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If you think you see exotic caulerpa anywhere – either at sea or on a beach – take a photo and report it at [report.mpi.govt.nz](http://report.mpi.govt.nz) or by calling **0800 80 99 66**.



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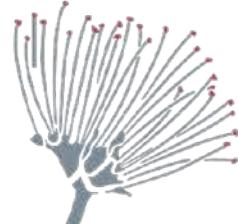
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On site you'll find our reuse shop with rescued items, such as tools, timber, appliances, furniture, homewares, clothing, and all sorts of quirky surprises. Everything is checked, sorted, tested, and repaired where needed before being offered back to the community at affordable prices. Some items make it to the online store or Trade Me, but the best finds are often snapped up onsite... so it pays to pop in regularly.

They accept donations of good-quality reusable items, as well as e-waste and building materials. (A small recycling fee applies to some e-waste to ensure safe, responsible processing.) And for those bigger clear-outs, their truck is out and about doing local "Reuse Roadies" around the Mercury Bay – just message or phone to book a pickup.



In just the first month of operation, Wāhi Tukurua diverted over 5,150kg of materials from landfill – building materials, tools, furniture, e-waste, and household goods, all kept in circulation. That's five tonnes of waste not buried in the ground, and a massive win for our environment.

The shop and goods donation drop offs are open Tuesday to Saturday. Online shopping is available 24/7 at [www.wahitukurua.co.nz](http://www.wahitukurua.co.nz).

So pop in for a browse – you never know what you'll find, and every purchase or donation helps keep Mercury Bay beautiful.



Words by  
**Kat Neilson-Jones**

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# Putting On the Pants

## *The Meteoric Rise of Local Talent Harry Marshall*

It's an undeniable fact that there are two categories of people – those who love musicals and those who don't. I am firmly in the first category and I'm used to coming away from a show with tunes stuck in my head, but I am not used to a show becoming the soundtrack to getting dressed in the morning.

Let me explain.

Last year I had the opportunity to watch the Bold Theatre production of 'Be More Chill' at the Meteor Theatre in Hamilton. If you are not familiar with it, 'Be More Chill' is a sci-fi musical that follows Jeremy Heere, an awkward high school student desperate to fit in. He discovers a supercomputer pill called a 'SQUIP' that promises to make him cooler by instructing him how to act. As Jeremy rises in popularity, the SQUIP begins controlling his decisions, leading to chaotic and unintended consequences. The musical explores themes of self-acceptance, peer pressure, and the consequences of conforming to social norms.

Harry Marshall played Michael in their Hamilton theatre debut, best friend to our protagonist Jeremy who feels pressured to take a SQUIP and steal the heart of Christine. Harry has been involved in a number of shows over the past decade, originally being a member of Thames Music and Drama before moving to Hamilton to pursue a Bachelor's in Music and Performing Arts at Wintec. Performing is a bit of a family affair as Harry's father recently wrote and directed his own original play with Thames Music and Drama. Harry's 2024 finished with a lead role in Jam Smith's play 'Soliloquy', also staged at The Meteor.

**Tell us a little about your studies and how it's going?**

I feel like I'm learning a lot and I'm gaining more performance opportunities than I originally had in Thames as well. It's been amazing to work with such skilled tutors, just having such knowledgeable people who have already succeeded in the industry really helps. I've also learned a lot about how much water you actually need to drink.

**What's your favourite song from a musical that you like to sing?**

The Museum Song from 'Barnum Musical' because patter is always fun.

**Favourite song from a musical you've been in:**

'Michael in the Bathroom'. Being able to pick a key that worked better for my voice (since the original is written for a baritone) instead of working my voice to fit the key. 'Michael in the Bathroom' is such a fun acting moment in the show as well, as it really feels like a pivotal moment in the show and being trusted with such an important moment was an honour.

**What's your favourite song that you can't sing?**

'Noel's Lament' from 'Ride the Cyclone' – it's just too low for my vocal range. Admittedly I could just put it in a higher key but contextually it wouldn't work as well.

**If you could see any musical, with any cast from any time, what would it be?**

I'm really just a sucker for musicals and if I could see any show live with the original cast I definitely would jump on it. But if I had to pick an answer to give you, it would be

the original cast of 'Beetlejuice'. That set was incredible and the special effects just went crazy.

*Harry is an exceptional local talent who is going to have a long and successful career. I know in 20 years' time when they are rightfully famous, I will still be telling people that it's Harry's fault that I have this song running through my head as I get dressed.*

### The Pants Song

When you love somebody  
You put your pants on for them!  
When you love somebody  
You take a chance just for 'em  
Chance just for 'em!  
If the road gets muddy  
Focus on your goal 'till the rough stuff's gone  
When you love somebody  
You put your pants on!

 Words by  
**Anne-Maree McDougall**



# SURE SHOT

## HAURAKI-COROMANDEL PHOTOGRAPHERS SERIES

### Featuring Lia Priemus

Over 50 years ago in Dunedin, while still at school, I started doing a few casual shoots for McRobie Photographic Studio. They still are a successful studio now but in those days they were situated at Arthur Barnett's department store, and my sister-in-law was one of their photographers.

I was employed to take street portraits of spectators enjoying public events such as Christmas parades. This progressed to being employed in the capacity as the second shoot for weddings taking photos of guests having a good time.

I moved forward into digital technology in 2012 and gained a professional photography diploma after completing my studies with the Photography Institute. To this day, portraits – be they street, travel or creative – are still one of my favourite genres of photography; I really like capturing people in the moment.

My husband and I are regular travelers to India and most of the portraits I have taken there are casual street shots in natural light.

My camera is with me wherever I go ... Sony Alpha 7R III and my allrounder 24-105mm lens. The people and communication, the vivid colours at times, the costuming and surroundings can all come together in one simple capture to tell an interesting real life story, at times bordering on photo journalism.

Middle Eastern dance/belly dance has also been a part of my life for many years and I am fortunate enough to have photographed many amazing dancers in the past and right up until recently.

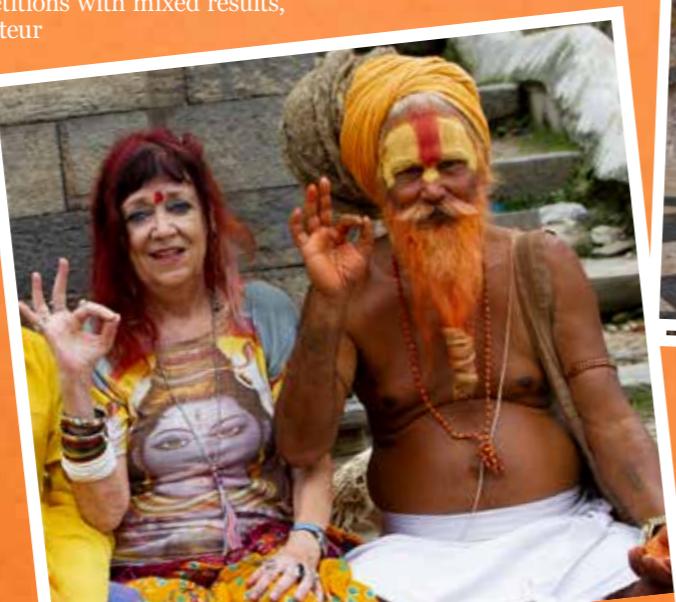
I do enter some of my work in photography competitions with mixed results, and if needs be I call myself an enthusiastic amateur photographer – we never stop learning or experimenting.

I highly encourage people who have an interest in photography to give it a go with any camera you have available ... yes, phone ones too. Experiment. Google some techniques, the world is your oyster.

Most of all, have fun.

**Instagram:** @priemus\_photography  
**Facebook:** @PriemusPhotography

Words by  
**Lia Priemus**



settings: ISO 250 - F/4.5 - 1/250 Sec



**Tribal Women, Pushkar, Rajasthan.**

One morning, we were sitting outside a local eating place in town, my camera on the table; it was a dull and rainy start to the day.

These beautiful village women were on their way to the holy temple. They spotted me, saw my camera and asked me to take their photo, lucky me.

It was very impromptu and honestly I would be telling an untruth if I was all about camera settings for this one. I cropped and edited this capture in photoshop because it was a bit duller than I wanted it to be.



Settings: ISO 250 - F/5.6 - 1/640 Sec

**The Band, Pushkar, Rajasthan the Holy lake**

We were in Pushkar at Diwali time and this is one of the top bands having a break, they really put their heart and soul into their music, full sound.

Once again an impromptu capture but definitely for nice day light I go for an ISO of 200 or 250 because I am confident that there is enough light for a nice clear image. Some cameras and lenses can create noise when going up in ISO ... that grainy speckled effect you can sometimes see on the blacks of an image taken in very low light or night time.



We asked Lia for only two photos, but that was far too hard. Scan the QR code to see two more!

Or visit: [coromind.nz/photographers-lia-priemus](http://coromind.nz/photographers-lia-priemus)

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**Safer Coromandel**

# PROUD TO BE LOCAL

## Pylat Senior

This summer, Safer Coromandel is spotlighting young people working hard to keep the Peninsula safe. This month, meet 18-year-old Pylat Senior – one of the region's newest volunteer firefighters.

Pylat lives in Te Mata and volunteers with both the Tapu and Thames fire brigades – Tapu is her home brigade and she responds to Thames during the day. She's spent nearly her whole life on the Coromandel, raised by her grandparents here from the age of three. She went to Te Puru School before boarding at Hamilton Girls' High School, where her love of water, fostered by a childhood on the Coromandel, led her to five years in the rowing squad – eventually becoming captain.

"Rowing required the same qualities and commitment as the fire brigade," she says.

When she moved home earlier this year, her thoughts turned to her community and the people who had supported her growing up. "I realised how much this place had given me," she says. "Joining the brigade felt like a way to give something back."

So she went to the local station one Monday night, the week before her

18th birthday. "From the moment I stepped in, I felt welcomed. That feeling stuck with me – that's why I kept showing up."

From there, every training session, callout, and course has helped Pylat grow. "There's been laughter, learning, and lots of hard work," she says. "I've met people from all over the district, and I look up to the women in both brigades. I've had such strong support from my senior leaders and regional support officers. I'm still new, but I'm focused on learning as much as I can and finding my place in FENZ."

Across the Coromandel, volunteer firefighters form the backbone of many emergency responses, attending everything from medical events and motor-vehicle accidents to search and rescue and storm call-outs. In some rural brigades, volunteers make up the entire crew. Nationally, that volunteer workforce delivers an estimated \$823 million in value each year – a reminder of how crucial they are to communities like ours.

Someone once asked her, "Don't you ever wish you got paid for what you do as a volunteer?" At first, she shrugged it off. Then later, when

talking to her grandparents, the words came out before she even thought. "Helping people is free, and the good karma that comes with it is the best kind of payment."

That's what being a volunteer firefighter means to her.

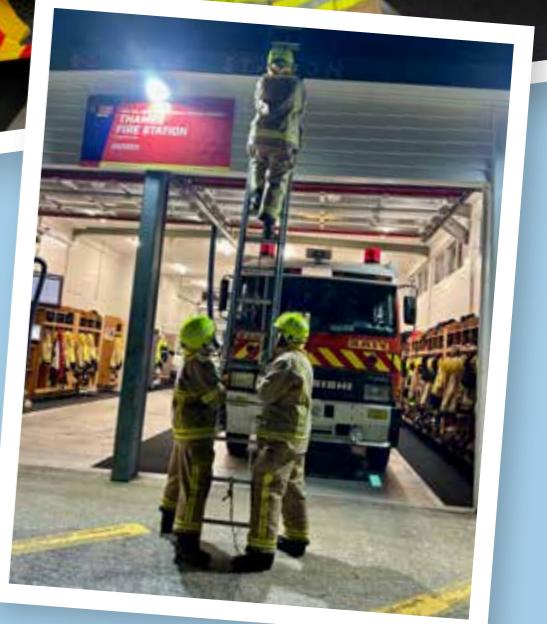
She encourages other young people to get involved, "Life is about stepping outside your comfort zone and seeing what you're capable of. What you put in is exactly what you'll get out, and volunteering gives back more than you can imagine."

This summer, her message to fellow young people is: "Stick together! Stay hydrated, use sunscreen, and know your limits."

Facebook: Safer Coromandel

Instagram: safer\_coromandel

Words by  
**Ayana Piper-Healion**



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# LETTING NATURE TAKE ITS COURSE ON GREAT MERCURY ISLAND

*Kākā, Pines, and the Slow Return of Native Forest*

If you look out at Great Mercury Island from Black Jack Road, you can see the full length of the island from north to south. On the southern half, there is a big pine tree plantation which is now over 40 years old, planted during the Muldoon 'Think Big' era on land which is considered very poor farmland. The pine forest became economically and environmentally difficult to harvest.

Where erosion is a problem, invasive plants and vines follow; pampas, woolly nightshade (also known as tobacco weed), gorse (not so bad), and moth plant all love land with exposed earth. If the pines were to be harvested, it would undoubtedly create a vast weed and erosion issue – good for goats, but that isn't the goal. Alternatively, as it stands now, the pine forest has accidentally become quite a unique native nursery.

The understorey in the pine forest is up to four metres tall, self-seeded by seed naturally present in the ground; it is a reverting native forest. In another 40 years, the pines will die back and rot into carbon on the forest floor, leaving a beautiful diverse young native forest from seed that is naturally occurring on the island. Being original island seed is a bonus. In a sense, it is another case study: mature pine plantations as nurseries. There is discussion about creating light wells in the pine forest which can also be viewed as a case study. In my opinion, I don't see any need to accelerate light wells, as the forest is already experiencing natural light wells from storms. Small pockets of pine forest collapse due to storms or intense wind blowing up a gully, naturally exposing patches of native trees.

More interestingly to me, kākā (parrots) are really helping the forest break down. They strip bark off, looking for bugs and grubs, and in doing so are accelerating the demise of the pines simply by being kākā – ringbarking branches and treetops.

I prefer to watch rather than to mess around with different techniques artificially, unless the issue is used as a case study. Even so, I find the case study about kākā doing the work far more interesting than other techniques for killing the pines, such as drill and fill, clear felling or spraying treetops.

Native trees don't have the same kind of bark that a lot of exotic trees have. The kākā love stripping off big sheets of bark from exotic trees to eat grubs, which ringbarks the branches, but native trees are quite immune to this behaviour. There was one trap station which for two years was completely buried by pōhutukawa bark and every time I visited the trap I had to dig it out. I called that huge tree, which was clearly targeted by kākā, the 'naked tree'. It had the tell-tale horizontal grooves in the trunk and branches that kākā make. I asked various people, 'Why do kākā make them?' about these grooves, which are common around the island – though in other cases not nearly as intensive as the 'naked tree'. I didn't get a clear answer.

One December, the big old grandad pōhutukawa blossomed like no other grandad pōhutukawa I have ever seen. It was striking; underneath, my traps were no longer covered in bark because there was none left to fall from the nude tree. I wondered if the kākā had farmed this tree intentionally or if there was a critter colony in the tree the kākā were feeding on. Had they intentionally made it bloom by stressing it to attract bugs or nectar? Either way, the tree became a standout and to this day it has scars from top to bottom.

 Words by  
**Andy Hopping**

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# where Wool Meets Whangamatā

*Leah Creaven Stitching Together Home and Heart*

Meet Leah Creaven. "I am a textile artist, and I make rug-tufted artwork that weaves together stories of land, connection and belonging." For Leah, wool is more than a material – it's a bridge between her Irish roots and her life in Whangamatā, a way to explore memory, identity and the quiet magic of slow creation.

Eight years ago, Leah traded Ireland's emerald landscapes for the shores of Aotearoa. After several years working in Martinborough's wine industry, she and her Taupō-born husband sought a better balance in Whangamatā. "The ocean, the community, the pace of life – it's all been great for the soul," she says. "And great for the art." The move shifted her creative perspective. Where Ireland's muted tones once dominated her palette, Whangamatā's bright light and saturated colours now infuse her work. "There's a spaciousness here that's filtered into how I make," she explains. Recent pieces experiment with negative space and contrast, reflecting the Coromandel's expansive coastline.

Leah's journey to textile art began with a degree in textile design, but it was a later job in a gallery – where she practised punch-needle art during quiet hours – that led her to rug tufting. "The obsession grew," she admits. "It became a way of communicating."

Her work is bold and tactile, sitting somewhere between painting and sculpture. Vibrant wool forms textured, layered pieces that invite touch. "There's a physicality to the process that I love," she says. Each artwork carries emotional weight, like Footin Turf, which captures childhood memories of stacking peat with her grandfather in Ireland. "It ties me back to my roots when they feel far away." Wool, a fibre deeply entwined with Irish culture, is her medium of choice. "My granny knitted jumpers and made hand-knotted rugs," Leah recalls. "Working with wool feels like honouring that history."

Leah's creative process is deliberate and meditative. Ideas often spark during weekly phone calls with her father, a trusted sounding board. "We start with work chats that turn into life chats," she laughs. From there, she moves to sketches, colour matching, and finally, tufting. This 'slow making' approach is central to her practice. "In the rhythm of repetition, there's a kind of meditation," she says. "Line after line,

stitch after stitch." The pace allows ideas to emerge organically, often mid-creation. "You can get lost in it – in a good way." Her studio tools reflect this ethos. Among them are old, squeaky wool winders, worn but reliable. "They're imperfect, but they work a charm," she says.

Leah challenges misconceptions about textile art being 'just craft.' "It's an art form rooted in history and identity," she asserts. "Every stitch carries meaning." The Coromandel creative community has embraced her work, from sold-out tufting workshops to local gallery showcases. "Seeing people leave with a new skill is incredible," she says. Collaborations with spaces like Whangamatā Gallery and Christine Rabarts' exhibit space have further cemented her place in the region's art scene.

Sharing personal work remains vulnerable. "If it's honest, it'll feel exposing," Leah acknowledges. "But vulnerability is connection. The more personal the piece, the more it might resonate with someone else."

Just for Fun

Wool or linen? "Wool – every time. It's warm, resilient, and full of character."

Best creative advice: "Stop thinking, start making."

Favorite local reset: A walk on Whangamatā Beach or the Wentworth Falls track.

Leah may joke about imposter syndrome, but her work speaks with unwavering clarity. In each tufted line, she stitches together past and present, Ireland and Aotearoa, creating art that's as heartfelt as it is vibrant.

Explore Leah's work:

**Instagram:**  
@leahcreaven\_rugs

**Website:**  
leahcreaventextiles.com

**Rug Tufting Workshops:**  
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 Words by  
**Lana Garland**





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# Honesty & Integrity: Being Scammed

Tuesday, October 7th started off with a stint in the dentist's chair, never a great start to any day, but way better than what transpired later in the day. After lunch I opened my computer desktop to be greeted by a flashing, beeping Windows page with an annoyingly loud female voice repeating itself over and over, "Security breach. Security breach. Your bank accounts and email address have been compromised." Or words to that effect. Flashing warnings filled the screen, "Immediate action required! Do not try to close this message. Call the Windows Helpline below and follow the instructions given to secure your computer." I managed to turn down the volume of the screeching voice but was unable to turn off the flashing screen.

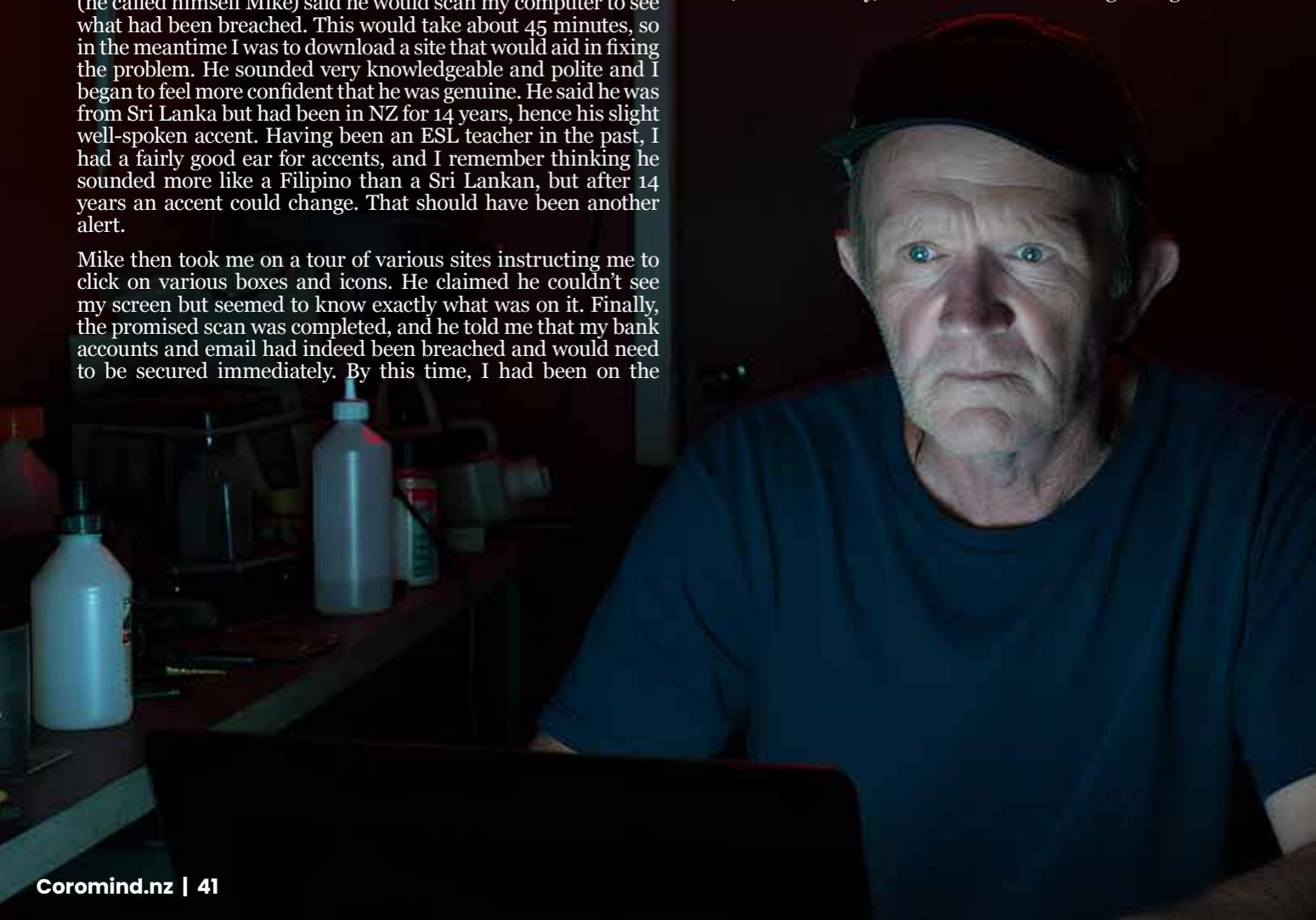
Fearing a scam, I accessed the Windows Help desk number, but received only a recorded message with options that promised a long wait before being realised. So, I called the 08-00 number on the screen. The hyphen should have alerted us to an irregularity, but when you are undecided about whether or not you are being scammed and your bank accounts are being emptied, your mind freaks out either way.

The voice that answered the call was very calm and sophisticated and sympathised with my dilemma and assured us he was part of the Windows fraud team and could help secure my computer. He said he would call me on my cell phone. That was when the long journey towards being really scammed started. Firstly, he (he called himself Mike) said he would scan my computer to see what had been breached. This would take about 45 minutes, so in the meantime I was to download a site that would aid in fixing the problem. He sounded very knowledgeable and polite and I began to feel more confident that he was genuine. He said he was from Sri Lanka but had been in NZ for 14 years, hence his slight well-spoken accent. Having been an ESL teacher in the past, I had a fairly good ear for accents, and I remember thinking he sounded more like a Filipino than a Sri Lankan, but after 14 years an accent could change. That should have been another alert.

Mike then took me on a tour of various sites instructing me to click on various boxes and icons. He claimed he couldn't see my screen but seemed to know exactly what was on it. Finally, the promised scan was completed, and he told me that my bank accounts and email had indeed been breached and would need to be secured immediately. By this time, I had been on the

phone with him for over two hours, and my brain was becoming exhausted and starting to lack focus. It felt like we had gone this far, and it would soon be all fixed. He said the securing process would take some time, at which point a black screen appeared which he claimed was controlled by AI. He asked about the accounts he had to secure and told me to type on the 'AI' screen. Then a blank screen with a moving cursor appeared, which Mike assured me was part of the securing process. I was instructed to access my accounts and email and tell him if there had been any suspicious activity over the past month. There hadn't been. Suddenly, the black 'AI' screen re-appeared with AI purportedly typing on it. Unfortunately, it made a simple spelling mistake and went back and corrected it. "That's strange," I thought, but when I questioned Mike about it, I was told that AI, being a human creation, sometimes made mistakes. Alert number 3, but my tired brain accepted such a lame explanation.

Then there was a declaration that Mike was also part of the NZ Government Fraud Office and would appreciate my cooperation in trying to determine the physical location of the hackers by making dummy small withdrawals from my accounts to try and lure the offenders into accessing my open accounts to steal money, thereby revealing their location. It seems like such an obvious scam now, but after being on the phone for four hours and not being that high up on the computer literacy scale, you start, or should I say, I started to believe strange things.



Alert number 4 manifested itself when I heard whispering on Mike's side of the phone. I questioned Mike about it, but he said I was mistaken. However, although my brain was fuzzed out at the time, my hearing was not, and I know I heard whispering. So, I called the bank's helpline and sure enough, the bank employee informed me that it was indeed a scam. I confronted Mike with this but he insisted he was with the fraud office, and he would replace the dummy withdrawals immediately, to prove his innocence. Of course, I didn't believe him and hung up the phone, to be greeted by the bank officer's words that the 'pending' withdrawals weren't small as Mike had promised and neither could they be halted by the bank. This surprised me as I thought the bank security systems would pick up the irregularity of the 'dummy' withdrawals.

At first, I was stunned after five brain numbing hours on the phone and computer. Then the self-blaming and desire to punch myself in the face began. How could I have been so gullible? I had previously thought I could spot a scam a mile off and there I was feeling stupid and totally exhausted.

That night I tried to sleep by attempting to calm the invasion of negative thoughts scrambling around in my foggy brain. By morning I had failed, even for one minute, to bring the chaos in my mind under control by adopting a philosophical attitude – that it was only money and many people were in far worse-off positions than I was. I tried yoga breathing, meditation and even thoughts of forgiveness towards the hackers. Nothing gave me peace for more than a few minutes and indeed it took several days to cast off the feelings I had, of being invaded, of being stupid and of being angry that there were people in the world who spent their time doing such things, obviously with no regard for the destructive consequences of such actions.

That morning, I visited the two banks concerned to close my accounts and report what happened. Then it was off to the police station to make the required report. Now it was a matter of waiting to find out whether or not our money was gone forever into the pockets of the unscrupulous swindlers. My computer professional told me that a large part of his company's business these days was dealing with increasingly sophisticated scams. At the request of the banks, he then cleaned my computer of all the bad stuff on it and secured all the files.

To their credit, both banks have since refunded my money after asking many questions about the scamming process. One bank explained that they were under no obligation to refund the money but did so because it was the first time I had been a scam victim and as a gesture of goodwill. They also sent me some very useful material about how to recognise a scam and what to do about it. I would recommend accessing your bank's scam information and if you are not sure whether you are being scammed hang up or close your device. Apparently, the average scam reported in NZ is around \$10,000, with some reaching into the millions. So please take care out there



Words by  
**Ross Liggins**

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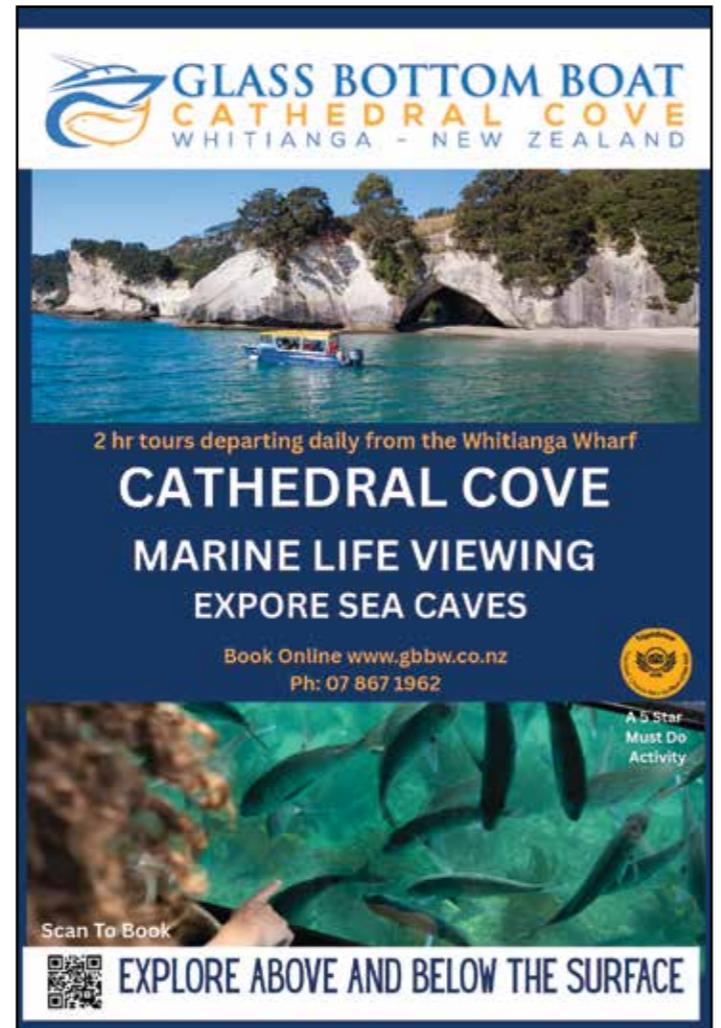
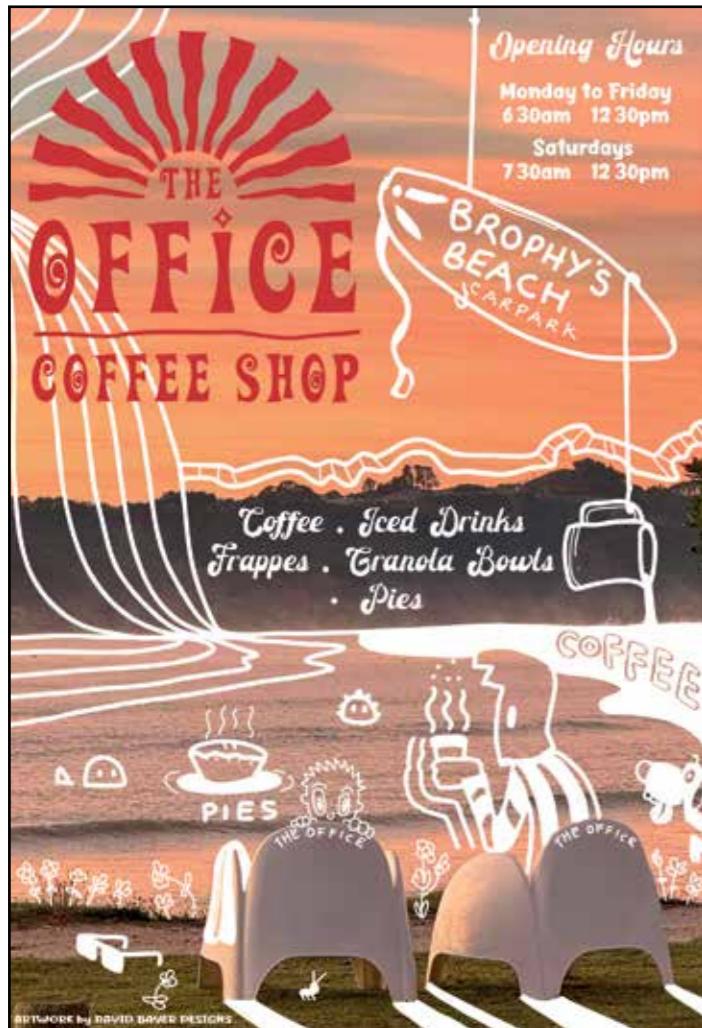
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# Waikato Coastcare

TIAKI TAKUTAI

## Caring for our dunes, together

After the big storms of 2020 and 2021, Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) proposed to reshape the eroded dunes at Pāuanui's south end into a wide, gentle slope and replant it in native sand-binding species.

Not everyone in the community was convinced. Some residents were reluctant to lose grass from the reserve for the project, while others questioned whether a greater dune with a gentle 3:1 slope was what was really needed to increase resilience to future extreme weather events.

So, a small group of residents started the Pāuanui Dune Protection Society (PDPS) and decided to dig deeper.

PDPS had one clear goal: to work with TCDC and Coastcare Waikato to restore a natural, self-sustaining dune system along the full length of Pāuanui Beach.

We talked to various coastal experts, studied the outcomes of other beach restoration projects, and learnt what science says about healthy dunes. Here's what we learnt.

- A dune with a gentle slope helps absorb storm energy and rebuilds naturally, while steeper, eroded slopes bounce waves back and make beach erosion worse.
- Most of the plants from past restoration efforts after storms at Pāuanui just got washed away in the next storm, leaving too few survivors to rebuild the dune.
- Having a wider, gently sloped dune area means more plants have a greater chance of survival after a storm event, so they can grow back down the slope to kickstart recovery.

We also realised there was work to do along the rest of the beach. Many of our dunes were choked with kikuyu, couch and the invasive gazania flower, which smothered native species and stopped them from trapping sand.

Removing these invaders, and in many cases replanting the cleared areas, help our dunes recover naturally after an erosion event.



Today, you only need to walk along Pāuanui's revitalised dunes to see what collaboration has achieved.

- ✓ Community planting and weeding days are highlights for locals of all ages – a chance to get sandy, meet neighbours, and see what teamwork can achieve.
- ✓ Over one kilometre of eroded dune face has been reshaped and replanted, with the final 190 metres scheduled for next year.
- ✓ Weed-infested dunes are being revived through careful spraying, weeding and replanting – more than 500 metres restored so far, with 700 metres planned over the next two years.
- ✓ Since May 2022, over 48,000 sand-binding dune species have been planted.
- ✓ PDPS fundraising has extended work beyond the TCDC/Coastcare Waikato budget, giving residents real "skin in the game" and pride in the results.

Yes, storms will still come, but our dunes now have the best opportunity to naturally recover. You, too, can help make a difference by joining your local Coastcare group to take part in planting or weeding events, and by taking some time to learn about how dunes work. The Coastal Restoration Trust of New Zealand has some good reading at [coastalrestorationtrust.org.nz](http://coastalrestorationtrust.org.nz).

Martin Hopkins and Bruce Burton  
Pāuanui Dune Protection Society



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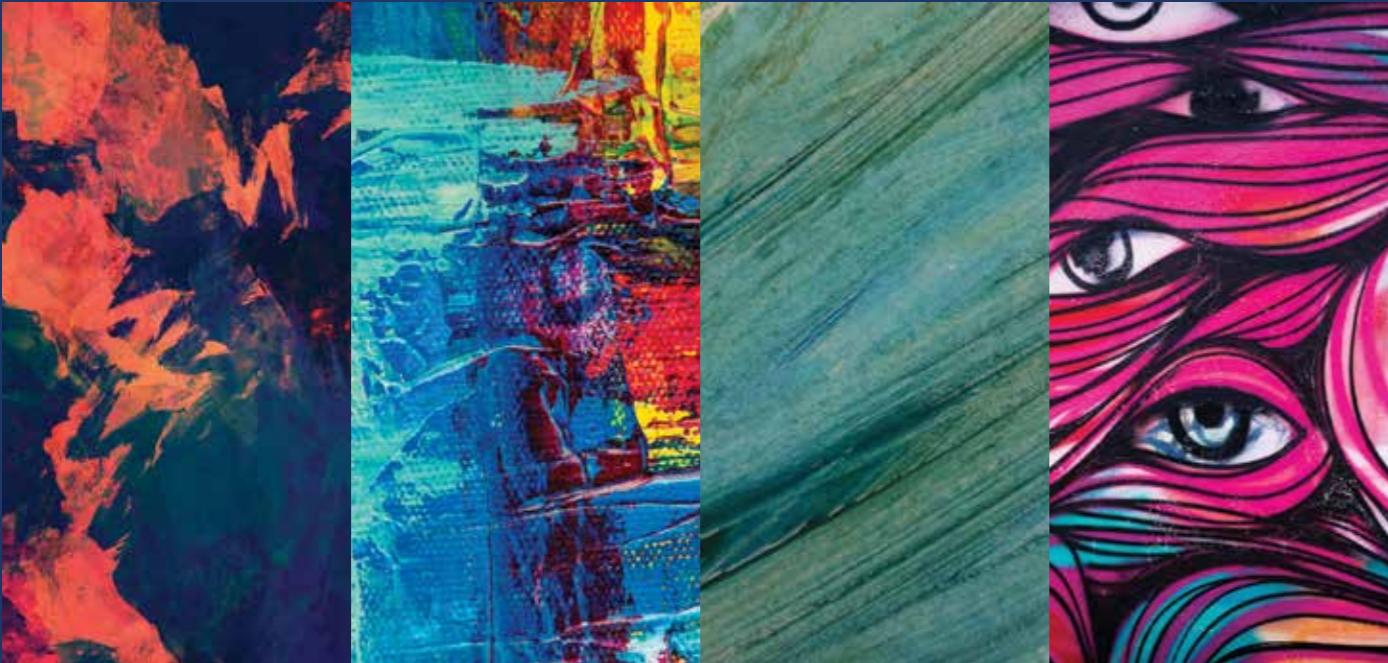
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# ENJOY THE PROCESS



Sharing thoughts on the value of the Visual Arts

- My aim as an art teacher has always been for students to enjoy the process. Students learn by doing.
- Art is fun. Some artworks are just about learning. Every artwork does not need to be displayed.
- Tapping on a keyboard develops different areas of the brain compared to holding a pen/pencil and writing or drawing. Drawing and writing optimise learning.\*
- The Visual Arts – drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, design and so on – are (in my opinion) the best subjects for developing synchronistic thinking – exploring broad relationships and links as opposed to linear (cause and effect) thinking
- The Art world appreciates ‘ideas development’ and good craftsmanship. Showing continuous development is a good thing. It is all about ideas and it is good to convey a message.
- Instead of sitting and trying to work out a problem, try drawing intuitively – the image that comes can be a quicker way of understanding what is going on for you at that time.
- Art is a positive addiction (like surfing). It is therapeutic to have a creative outlet.
- We live in a world full of media images and yet fewer students than ever are taking Visual Arts as a subject.



Words by

**Janet Hoogwerf**

\*In a study reported on in 2016, cognitive neuropsychologists Audrey van der Meer and Ruud van der Weel from the renowned Norwegian University of Science & Technology (NTNU) found that drawing by hand activates larger networks in the brain than typing on a keyboard. They showed that learning is different when using a pencil/pen, compared to using a keyboard. When explaining the importance of their results, van der Meer noted that, “This difference in activity is really significant, it tells us that using a pen to take notes means that the brain is able to process learning in a much more effective way.”

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