

COROMIND



Issue 38

How I Found a Truth Train

Potter Madison North Cowper
Reclaiming Her Joy in Making

The Global Treasures of Hauraki

The Firth of Thames and
Kopuatai Peat Dome

FOOT-TAPPING IN COLVILLE

The Music of John Veysey

PRIDE FROM THE COROMANDEL

Hāmiora Bailey and the
Work of Holding Community

On Air



Watch & Listen

Do you believe in unicorns?

There is something powerful in the saying, "There are dreamers and there are doers", especially when it comes to our slice of paradise – Hauraki Coromandel.

Surely we have all spent time around the dreamers: those who hold wholesome fantasies of making a difference or stamping their mark on the earth, while spending most of their actual time in what we might call the 'concept phase' – making lattes or surfing until the moment is right to act.

We have also seen the doers – those who are constantly making, creating, and crafting. Busy-bodies who produce such a prolific amount of stuff that you sometimes wonder if they ever relax, sleep or simply enjoy the presence of themselves, a Randy Newman lyric, or a Coromandel sunset.

I expect we have all had our own dreams in life, then re-evaluated them over the years into what has become our current path of fulfilment. Some of us along the coastline might be doers – the folk probably too busy to read this ... so I guess I can say what I like about them ... the busy-body poopys.

Reflecting back on three years of Coromind, it would be hard to argue that we haven't stumbled upon a few of those 'hybrid' beings – the dreamers that do, or as I like to call them: unicorns.

Leo and Taylor are Coromind unicorns.

They had an opportunity to create the magazine. They thought long and hard about it. And once the idea got past conception, they dove into the role – expanding it, stretching it, and encompassing so


much more than any other local magazine of its kind had ever dreamed of. Coromind is colourful, groovy, relevant, and tackles some tricky topics. The magazine is so stunning and sought-after that they can occasionally allow some less exciting editorials like this one onto the inside page of the front cover.

I've known Leo and Taylor for many years now, and although I've supported them every step of the way, I also had zero faith in them from the get-go. Altbays? Surely a flash in the pan. Coromind magazine? Absurd – they can't even spell!!!

Happily, I am the fool when it comes to the success they've had connecting people, art, culture, vowels, consonants, and fun.

I aspire to be a unicorn too. In my spare time, I teach, tutor, and help grow the next generation of well-rounded humans. Like them, I've established projects such as The Music Place Whitianga (music tutoring) and Mercury Bay Performing Arts (a not-for-profit children's community theatre). I couldn't have started these without the support of Leo and Taylor and the whole Coromind team – who have shown far more faith in me than I ever showed in them.

I'm honoured to be growing the good alongside these unicorns. And although, in reality, I may look more like a rhinoceros, I lean towards the theory that this is close enough.

 Words by **Fabian Roberts**



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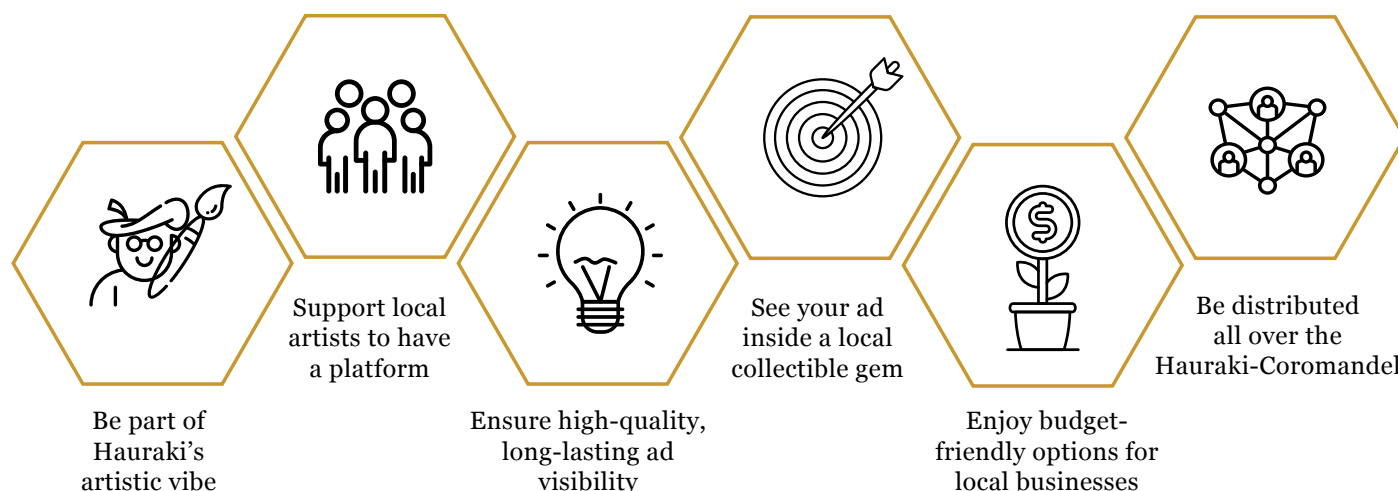
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COROMIND

MEMBERS

Ali Gustafson

Just Getting Started

What a journey it is, with so much to learn. I've always loved painting and drawing; in high school, it was my main focus. From there, I stepped into the world of graphic design, working for various printing and advertising companies. About six years ago, I found my way back to painting when my daughter placed a canvas in front of me and told me it was time to give it another go.

At first, I took things slowly, painting only two or three pieces a year while continuing to work in my graphics role. But after moving to Whitianga four years ago, my painting truly took off. Being surrounded by some of the most beautiful beaches in the world is a real blessing and a constant source of inspiration for my work. I've always loved the beach, it's where I feel most at peace. The constant movement of the sea is deeply meditative, and that's why coastal scenes feature so strongly in my paintings.

Four years ago, after spending several holidays in Whangapoua, I made the decision to leave Auckland, where I had lived my entire life, and move to the Coromandel permanently. I had completely fallen in love with the place, and it's been one of the best decisions I've ever made. I feel like I've found my tribe. The area is filled with incredibly talented artists and musicians, and there's a relaxed, supportive energy here that's hard to beat.

Last year, inspired by my daughter Emma who is a full-time artist, I decided to pursue art more fully. I took a leap of faith, left the job I'd been in for 18 years, and haven't looked back. It's easy in life to become stuck in routine and security-driven jobs, never giving ourselves the chance to explore our true passions, passions that can grow into fulfilling careers and bring far greater reward.

Emma and I both work from our home in Whitianga, and she has been an incredible source of encouragement to me every step of the way. We share a wonderful relationship built on mutual support. We love to travel together. Last year we had the opportunity to visit some of the world's most renowned art galleries throughout London and Italy; it was a true highlight for both of us.

Painting isn't always easy, it often involves struggle, perseverance, dedication, and a great deal of self-motivation. But in the end, it's always worth it. I still have a long way to go but I'm definitely on my way.

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Words by
Ali Gustafson



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Ali's Works

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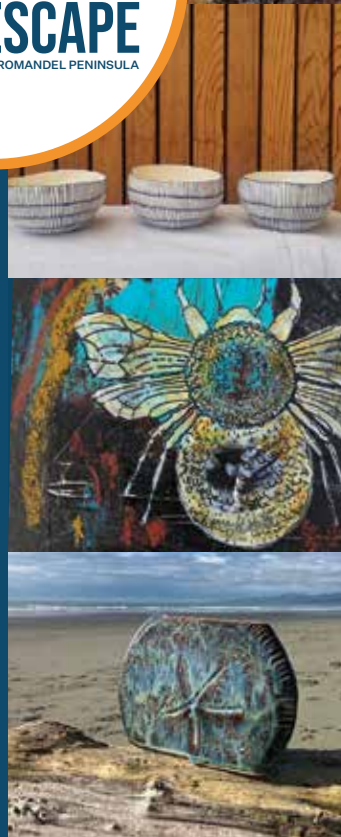
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From Cape Cod Shores to the Coromandel Sands Series

A WASHASHORE IN KIWILAND

Making your Childhood Wanderlust a Reality

I made the decision to move to New Zealand sometime in the late 80s, which would have put me in the 9 to 11-year-old range. I wasn't looking to escape home because I was unhappy; I had a truly wonderful childhood growing up on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. It was simply because I yearned for adventure, and despite having never even left America, I had fallen in love with New Zealand. It was in the pages of some long since forgotten magazine that I first read about the alluring, far-away island country in the middle of nowhere with fantastical-looking birds, people with beautiful tattoos on their faces, and mountain ranges that seemed to go on forever. I was thoroughly enchanted. I decided that I didn't just want to go there someday; I wanted to live there.

If the 9 to 11 year old range seems a bit young to want to move to another country, it might make sense when I explain that I was a child who was practically obsessed with travel and adventure. My favorite books were *Treasure Island*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Julie of the Wolves*, *The Black Stallion*, *Hatchet*, and *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. (In addition to desperately wanting to travel, I was absolutely convinced I could survive being stranded in the middle of nowhere with a wild animal companion.)

I pored through my parents' stacks of National Geographics, dreaming about visiting the faraway places I read about. I wanted to hear languages and accents different from my own, to meet people who looked different from me. I thumbed through the New Yorker every week, clipping out advertisements for overseas adventures and sending away for brochures filled with pictures of beautiful places. (Throughout the late 80s and early 90s, my parents received a confusingly large number of brochures in the mail for things like guided hikes through the Costa Rican rainforests, or months-long excursions to Antarctica). I had an ever-expanding list of countries I wanted to visit: Peru, Costa Rica, France, Thailand, Tibet, Australia. But New Zealand was always at the top.

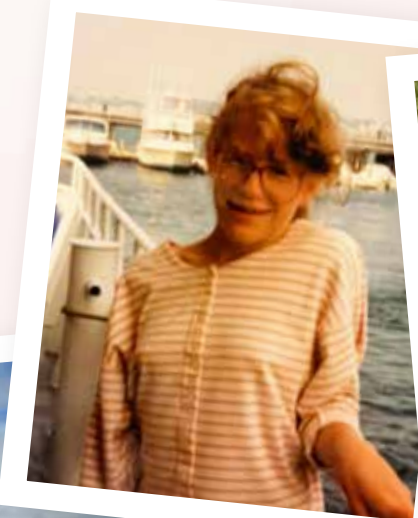
Four decades later, I'm at the tail end of fulfilling my childhood dream. I've now been living here for two years and was recently granted my Partner of a New Zealander Resident Visa. In 2027, I can apply for Permanent Residency and the bureaucratic portion of my immigration journey will finally, officially be done.

The immigration process is overwhelming, but I also found it interesting. Not wanting my endless hours of research to go to waste, I started a blog two years ago (www.newzealandchronicles.com) to document, for anyone who's interested, what it's really like to up and move to a foreign country. I knew when I embarked upon this journey that it would sometimes be difficult, but I could not have predicted how much determination it was going to take. I had ample time to research and prepare for the move; I had no house, no children, no pets, no long-time career tying me down; I was able to save money by moving back in with my parents for a few years. And I'm highly organised. Yet even with all that in my favour, the immigration process has still been a formidable challenge, one which I've thoroughly documented along the way.

The subtitle of my blog is 'The Adventures of a Washashore in Kiwiland'. A 'washashore' is anyone who's moved to Cape Cod from somewhere else (as opposed to 'Cape Codders', those of us who were born and raised there). Even after several years of living in NZ, I still feel like a washashore – and suspect I always will. But that's not a bad thing. After all, most of my favourite childhood adventure stories started with someone alighting upon unknown shores.

In this six-part series, a distilled version of what I've shared on my blog, I'll talk about how I went from a starry-eyed kid with a stack of National Geographics to a legal New Zealand resident. Come along with me for this wild ride of love, paperwork, money and determination.

Words by
Hilary Emerson Lay



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Ahuahu & Andy Series

THE REAL COST OF PEST-FREE ISLANDS

The Broader Challenge Facing Great Mercury Island

The major pest eradication on Ahuahu / Great Mercury Island in 2014 was a public/private project.

I was then employed directly by the island owners; the island paid my salary (funded privately) to ensure that the multi-million-dollar investment that had been pumped into the restoration project over a period of a few years was protected by someone dedicated to just that job. There is still to this day a full-time ranger employed to maintain the pest-free status.

Just to be clear, a privately owned pest-free island with public access is a forever commitment of hard work, worry and cost. In this case, the risk almost entirely comes from human interaction between the island and the mainland via boats. DOC doesn't have the ability to follow through with that long-range commitment, but it was a partner in the eradication process and the post-eradication settling in process. The science, passion and logistics by specialists in island restoration brought forward under the DOC umbrella was critical to even contemplating such a huge undertaking. The people on the ground planning and undertaking that work were exceptional, their experience harking back to the time of the Forest Service's goat hunting and groundbreaking firsts in Island restorations, Korapuki Island. They were practical, pragmatic and experienced and often seemed to be let down by the upper management decision-making of DOC processes and restructures, going all the way to central government.

For the future pest-free management of Ahuahu / Great Mercury Island, the owners are responsible for managing the pest-free status of the island, home to translocated species; the well-being of such translocated species is monitored by DOC.

The seven islands known as the Mercury Islands are nature reserves and are internationally significant; they are within the World Heritage Site spectrum. They are hugely important ecologically and sadly this is not made common knowledge out of fear of promoting poaching of rare and endangered species for international trade. I personally disagree with this strategy; I feel it is counterproductive, education being a much more productive and value-laced strategy. Without education, we sort of see people stumbling around unaware of the damage they could do or the potential for the future. You won't hear much from DOC about the true significance of those islands, in order to protect them; you are more likely to get a 'check your boat for rats and mice' message.

Great Mercury Island is a feeding and breeding habitat for birdlife four times larger than all the other islands combined. It offers safe and usable land available to native birds, migratory seabirds and future translocatable species. It also is the only island where the general public are allowed ashore and can experience this kind of birdlife. It acts as a safety buffer between the mainland and the other islands. It is a great gift. From my place on the ground, it made sense.

In New Zealand, because of commercial priorities, we are vulnerable to becoming a country that risks having only hand-reared kiwi. These birds are a symbol to be proud of, the apex of New Zealand wildlife. To sustain kiwi, which are apex, there must be a healthy forest; basically, everything else underneath the kiwi forms the ecosystem the kiwi represents and needs to survive. It isn't about the kiwi itself, so much as the healthy habitat each breeding pair requires. The islands are safer than the mainland, really the only defensible habitat against our mainland drive for commerce, trade and internet shopping; they are home to many of our endangered species for this reason.

Future pest-free management is very much a long-term plan looking forward 100 years and it asks the key question: How can this island, these islands, be protected and maintained under the ever-increasing social pressure they are now coming under, caused by subdivision development for baches and some residential housing in Whitianga, Matarangi and Cooks Beach? This introduces a much greater and largely non-resident snatch-and-grab style of boating experience fuelled by the business association being focused on getting bums on seats.

When I look ahead 50 – 100 years, the most valuable asset I can see in a fiscal sense will be the rarity of well-preserved islands and the sea around them and the shared knowledge of what those islands actually represent.

I hope the developers slow down and educate new home buyers. I hope businesses can see value further into the future beyond cashflow and that we can hold our taonga high up on a pedestal respectfully, where they should be.

Words by
Andy Hopping

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**PROUD TO
BE LOCAL**

Catherine Doyle

**WHAT ARE YOUR FAMILY LINKS
WITH THE COROMANDEL?**

I am a descendant of the Hamilton
and Lee families on my mother's side.
Both have been in the Whitianga and
Whenuakite districts since 1866.

**WHERE ARE YOU LIVING NOW?
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN
THERE?**

I now call Australia home and reside
on a property by Lake Tinaroo on
the Atherton Tablelands, inland from
Cairns. I have been living in FNQ for
the past eight years.

**WHEN WERE YOU LIVING IN
THE COROMANDEL? WHICH
SCHOOLS DID YOU ATTEND, AND
FOR HOW LONG?**

In 1973, my family moved from
Auckland to Whenuakite, and I
attended Whenuakite Primary School.
I went to Mercury Bay Area School for
my high school years and left in 1982.

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

I love to travel. My life is one big
holiday, working or otherwise!

I first went to Australia in 1985. After
returning to NZ, I was invited on a tour
to Egypt and Israel, and afterwards
spent time living and working in
London. I worked for a tour company
there and travelled to Europe as part
of my job. I returned to NZ in 1992,
then left again in 1996, returning to
Sydney. I moved to Papua New Guinea
in 1999 – what an adventure that part
of my life has been! It's also where
I met my husband. Together, we've
travelled extensively. We've been to
the bottom of the world, and in 2025
we got to go the top of the world. I've
worked mostly in communications
and office administration. I learnt
computer skills 'on the job' in London

and have had some great jobs over the
years – working as a telephonist at
Telecom and at a couple of very posh
hotels, and as a secretary with London
Underground, Insight Tours, Auckland
Airport, and Wellington Support
Services. Working in PNG allowed me
to apply all my skills and also develop
new ones in accounting software,
training, and management.

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

Living and working in Papua New
Guinea was an amazing life journey.
I volunteered on the management
committee of RSPCA of Papua New
Guinea for 18 years. I currently sit
on a management committee for a
women's shelter in Cairns. For me,
volunteering in this capacity is how I
can do something that helps others. So
many volunteers in our communities
give so much more, and they should
all be recognised and commended for
their efforts.

**HAVE YOU BEEN BACK TO THE
COROMANDEL RECENTLY?
IMPRESSIONS?**

My most recent visit was in July 2025.
Our high school form year had a class
reunion. How wonderful it was to see
everyone and how much fun we had
catching up! The weather was divine,
the sun shone all weekend, and we had
a luncheon on the Saturday hosted by
Lisa and Geoff Abrahamson – with the
added surprise of a boat ride on the
Whitianga Waterways. We got to catch
up not only with classmates but also
with our teachers, Ron Morgan and
Margaret and John Neighbours.

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

During school holidays, I worked at the



Ferry
Landing Store
from the age of 14 until I left school
and moved to Auckland. While I'm glad
to have grown up on a dairy farm,
where we helped with milking cows
and feeding calves, I realised I enjoyed
dealing with people more than bovines.
My husband and I were married at
Cathedral Cove Lookout in 2004. Our
reception was held at The Church in
Hahei. The sun was shining and it was
an awesome day!

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

I had many friends during my school
years and have been blessed to travel
and live with some of my high school
girlfriends. To this day, Cathy, Sue,
Lorna, Miranda and I travel together to
different places annually to create new
memories.

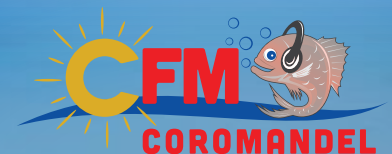
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This is an edited version of a bigger
heartfelt chat between Catherine and
her ex-teacher Ron Morgan.

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ART CONTINUES TO EDUCATE US

The Legacy of Indian Art

Here are some thoughts from a recent trip to India. Art continues to educate us centuries and millennia later – from prehistoric cave drawings and tapestries to the use of glass beads for jewellery, and terracotta used for figurines as well as everyday functions such as storing grain or water. Some examples are featured below.



Image of Tapestry

Tapestry using soil colours from earth/clay as pigments to add colour to the ink drawings.



Mother & Child

Uttar Pradesh: At the cultural crossroads

The state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) is in Northeast India, below the Nepalese border. This state in the Indus Valley (birthplace of Jainism) has over 241 million inhabitants, accounting for 16.5% of India's population and 3% of the total world population.

I visited Prayagraj (formerly known as Allahabad), a city with an estimated population of 1.53 million, to stay with my Dad's sister Amita Giri (Binni Fua). Prayagraj lies close to Triveni Sangam, the 'three-river confluence' of the Ganges. It is an international tourism destination, with Varanasi to the south. In ancient scriptures, Buddha is recorded as stating that bathing in Prayaga cannot wash away cruel and evil deeds; rather, the virtuous one could be pure in heart and fair in action.

Allahabad Museum: Where time speaks

Artefacts in the Allahabad Museum intimate what life would have been like 3,000 – 40,000 years ago in this Indus Valley.



Terracotta

Terracotta Figure of Elephant. Ahichhatra, c. 5th century C.E.



Rock Art

Cave drawing: Warriors hunting white rhino in the Indus Valley



Terracotta

Terracotta containers for water



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Words by
Nira Giri

Jiwa: Soul, Spirit, Vital Force

When a Boat Chooses Its Skipper



Jiwa in the Indonesian language means 'soul, spirit or vital force'. It is also the name given to a 28-foot trimaran yacht by its builder Wayne and his wife Jill who were practitioners of an ancient Indonesian meditation at the time. You may have noticed that by coincidence, the letters comprising Jiwa are the first two letters of each of their names. *Jiwa* was designed on Waiheke Island by an Englishman named Bernard Rhodes who had sailed from his homeland to New Zealand in a 22-foot baby sister of *Jiwa* named *Klis*. Bernard had started his sailing career as a young boy on Lake Windermere in England and went on to become a certified naval architect, a skill that would serve him well during his future years in New Zealand. In his spare time, he built *Klis* and in 1966 set off single-handed for the West Indies, eventually arriving in Aotearoa three years later in 1969.

His work at shipbuilding yards in England had instilled in him a deep dislike of nuclear submarines and super tankers and during the 1970s he crewed on, or skippered, well-known ships like *Spirit of Peace* and *Fri* during protests in the Pacific against nuclear weapons testing and proliferation, enduring some epic confrontations with the French navy along the way. Thanks to the efforts of the Peace Squadron and many other individuals and organisations like Greenpeace, we are fortunate to be still free of the nuclear menace. With the current bunch of nutters in world leadership positions, especially the one who holds the recently re-named US Department of War's nuclear codes, I for one am glad that NZ is a nuclear weapons- and ships-free zone.

During the 1990s Bernard, with his Japanese wife Yachiyo and their two sons, sailed their newly-built 38 foot catamaran *Flying Carpet* to Japan. Having lived on Waiheke for some time, I knew Bernard and his whānau (family); I was privileged (along with my wife at that time, Kimiko) to spend a few days with them on board *Flying Carpet* on an island off Nagasaki, where one of two atomic bombs was tested on humans at the end of World War II. The test was successful. Estimates vary but they managed to kill between 75 and 80,000 people with just one bomb. And to think they have another 5,177 bigger ones sitting there awaiting the pressing of the red button, not to mention the stocks of bombs that other nuclear powers like Russia, France, England, Israel and others have. We live in a mad world.

Since their return to NZ (surviving a typhoon on their way home), the Rhodes family have been involved in many maritime

projects including Hauraki Gulf charters, volunteering on *Spirit of NZ* and restoring classic wooden boats.

On my return from Japan, and living in Whitianga, I had been thinking of trading my 23 foot Wharram catamaran for a larger vessel due to the arrival of a water-loving baby daughter Hanako. James Wharram, another Englishman, had designed a flotilla of cheap-to-build Polynesian-style catamarans ranging from 4.3 to 19 metres. Wharram was quite a colourful character. He had two wives and often had several relationships with other women at the same time. He lived what he called 'an open and free Polynesian lifestyle'. His designs were popular with those without deep pockets and are found in waters all over the world.

Anyway, I wasn't sure what kind of boat would replace my small Wharram catamaran named *Ruamoko* (god of earthquakes, volcanoes and seasons), a name which I am sure protected her and her crew during many a sea voyage around the gulf. However, while walking along Ostend Causeway on a visit to Waiheke Island I came across a trimaran pulled up on the sand. It had a familiar look and I suddenly realised it was a larger version of *Klis II*; I thought it had to be a Rhodes design. I tracked down its builder and owner Wayne Robson who had named her *Jiwa*. He was a well-respected Waiheke house builder with a fine eye for detail and quality. Wayne told me that his boat *Jiwa* was for sale but there was already a prospective buyer. I asked if I could see inside and on opening the hatch I was greeted by a beautiful natural wood cabin with a small kitchen, two single bunks and a toilet. There was another almost double bunk aft. "Well," I thought, "This is the boat for me, if it decides to come my way," and sure enough, a week later Wayne phoned to say it was mine if I wanted it. He told me that *Jiwa* had taken about a year to build in his back yard, so I guessed that the price he was asking would have only covered the cost of materials. With Bernard's design experience combined with Wayne's quality building, I said "Yes please" without hesitation and without bargaining over the price. I knew I was getting a quality craft.

To be continued ...

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The Firth of Thames and Kopuatai Peat Dome

When you picture New Zealand's natural wonders, wetlands might not be the first thing that springs to mind. Yet these quiet, waterlogged landscapes are ecological powerhouses – filtering water, storing carbon, and providing sanctuary for our taonga species.

Two local wetlands, the Firth of Thames and Kopuatai Peat Dome, are so extraordinary they've earned international recognition under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, a global treaty dedicated to protecting these vital ecosystems. Wetlands are also taonga (treasures) for tangata whenua as mahinga kai – providing kai, plants for rongoā Māori (traditional medicine), and deep cultural and spiritual significance.

What is the Ramsar Convention?

Signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, this treaty focuses on wetlands – those peatlands, marshes and swamps that often go unnoticed hold a massive role in sustaining human and wildlife communities. The Department of Conservation is the lead agency for this Convention and manages most of New Zealand's Ramsar sites.

Much of Hauraki Biodiversity Ranger Rachel Langman's mahi is based at these special places. "Protecting our wetlands isn't just my job – it's a privilege and they deserve our care," says Rachel. "From managing invasive pest plants and animals to managing water levels and collaborating with iwi and stakeholders, the mahi is hands-on and deeply rewarding."

Firth of Thames: A Haven for Shorebirds

Stretching along the edge of the Tīkapa Moana/Hauraki Gulf, the Firth of Thames is a shimmering expanse of tidal flats – mudflats, shell banks, grass flats, mangrove forest, saltmarsh and freshwater margins.

On the western shore of the Firth is Pūkoro Miranda – a hub for shorebird activity. Each summer, thousands of migratory shorebirds arrive from as far away as Alaska and Siberia, seeking refuge and food. Among them are kūaka/bar-tailed godwits, famous for their epic non-stop flight from Alaska to Aotearoa. "The Firth isn't just a pit stop; it's a lifeline and a bird lover's dream," says Rachel.



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Rich mudflats teem with shellfish and worms, sustaining species like the wrybill, whose curved bill is perfectly adapted to probing riverbeds. For decades, the Pūkoro Miranda Shorebird Centre has provided advocacy and education to visitors and schools – proving that conservation starts with knowledge and passion.

Kopuatai Peat Dome: A Carbon-Storing Giant

Travel inland and you'll find a very different wetland, Kopuatai Peat Dome – the largest unaltered restiad peat bog in Aotearoa and largest intact raised bog in the Southern Hemisphere. Covering 10,201 hectares, this dome acts as a natural sponge locking away greenhouse gases and helping to combat climate change. Beneath its surface lies a hidden archive of history – layers of peat that record centuries of environmental change.

"Kopuatai is a hidden botanical giant," says Rachel. "The centre is dominated by wire rush and sedges, while the outer margins feature mānuka, cabbage trees, and kahikatea patches – habitat for rare species like the matuku hūrepo/Australasian bittern."

Why Protect Wetlands?

Wetlands were often undervalued, drained for agriculture or development – yet they provide irreplaceable ecosystem services: flood control, water purification, carbon storage, and biodiversity. Losing them means losing these benefits – and the species that depend on them. By protecting special places like the Firth of Thames and Kopuatai Peat Dome, we're keeping a global promise and making sure biodiversity and culture thrive for generations to come.

Learn more about wetlands here: www.doc.govt.nz

Photos

Top: Kopuatai Peat Dome Aerial views during monitoring flights | DOC®

Bottom Left to right:

Shorebirds and sunsets at Pūkoro Miranda | Peter Drury®.

Planting bee with DOC and Pūkoro Miranda Shorebird Centre | DOC®

The migratory kūaka/godwits at Miranda | Peter Drury®



How I Found a Truth Train

Madison North Cowper Reclaiming Her Joy in Making

Driving Creek was the net that caught me after a long period overseas; a nest for getting in touch with my creative voice. When I arrived at the residency, it'd been over a year since I'd used a pottery wheel. I'd been thinking about art a lot, but I hadn't had the chance to make much.

One afternoon, I was peacefully making petals in The Sump, an artist studio at Driving Creek named after the massive waste oil sump that once occupied the space. The oil was collected from local garages and used to fire the big brick kiln below, a process that took two days and consumed gallons upon gallons of fuel. Copper wires once ran from The Sump down into the kiln on the lower level, connecting the two spaces like some kind of industrial ecosystem. I'd been a train driver at DCR when it got converted into a studio before I went abroad, and I remember how the smell lingered for months. The Sump studio was built on top of another oil sump that still lies beneath it, and is made from a combination of adobe walls and wooden planks – with ceramic sculptures, paintings and trinkets lining its rugged windowsills, decorated by artists in residence that have occupied it.

So, I was there in The Sump, making a large vase adorned with clay petals as the afternoon sun streamed in through the dusty windows. When I sat back to look at what was coming out from my sculpture, I was struck by a surge of inspiration, like a lightning bolt. A grand feeling of freedom and joy bubbled up inside me, as what I saw, at last, was that I was making exactly what I'd hoped it would be. For the first time in a long time, I felt proud of what I was creating. That moment of creative freedom made me think back on how long it had taken to get here.

For over a decade I'd been consistently art-making and, for the majority of that time, I didn't feel very connected with my work. I had a lot of borrowed ideas – shaped by what surrounded me rather than what came from within.

When I first started drawing, my art was all about anime. That was my entry point into creativity. Later, as a Tumblr-era internet kid, I absorbed a lot of mainstream online aesthetics and trends. In art school, my work became more complicated as I tried to fit into ideas of what I should be making, and in the mix, I absorbed the belief that pottery, as a craft, wasn't as valued or important as other art forms. I was still unlearning that when I first came to Driving Creek in 2022, onboarded first as a pottery tutor and then later, a train driver.

Whilst I'd been overseas, things began to shift. I'd taken a break from sharing or scrolling art on social media to try and clarify what it was that I really valued making. In Spain

and Morocco, I was moved by the incredible craftsmanship I saw everywhere – pattern and intricate detail, in the streets, in sculpture, on doors, plaques, buildings, and furniture, made with devotion, skill, and cultural depth. I'd moved to the Iberian Peninsula for a relationship, and although that didn't pan out, I'd instead rediscovered this part of myself – a way to honour the maker who values skill, the handmade, and the beauty of craft itself.

Finally landing back into art-making, I was filled with a playful, joyful character, and my clay sculpture was mirroring that aliveness. I got up to find Rosy and Rich, two other resident artists, eager to share what my mind had just opened up to. I told them that, having experienced this euphoria, I was a bit worried that I wouldn't want to do anything else but develop my creative language. "That's the artist's curse", said Rich, with a smile.

In that moment, I realised that the pure joy of creating something alive and true meant far more to me than any external reward or recognition ever could.

My artwork is a map of all the things I have been, and the journey that I am still on. I feel relief in no longer pressuring something I love to be something other than what it naturally is. There is so much reward from creating work that honestly reflects my inner world. Through sculpting, I become.

I think that after many years wondering what the 'right' thing is to pursue, my heart has recognised what was always meant to be fulfilling. Without a doubt, Driving Creek has, over the years, been a foundational part of my journey, giving me the time, space and network to rediscover my joy for making.

I am excited by the depth I could take this, by dedicating myself further to artistry. My grounding guide now is simply to continue to give myself the opportunity to make high-quality artwork that's connected to being authentic, expressive, and **true to me**.

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Words by
**Madison
North
Cowper**

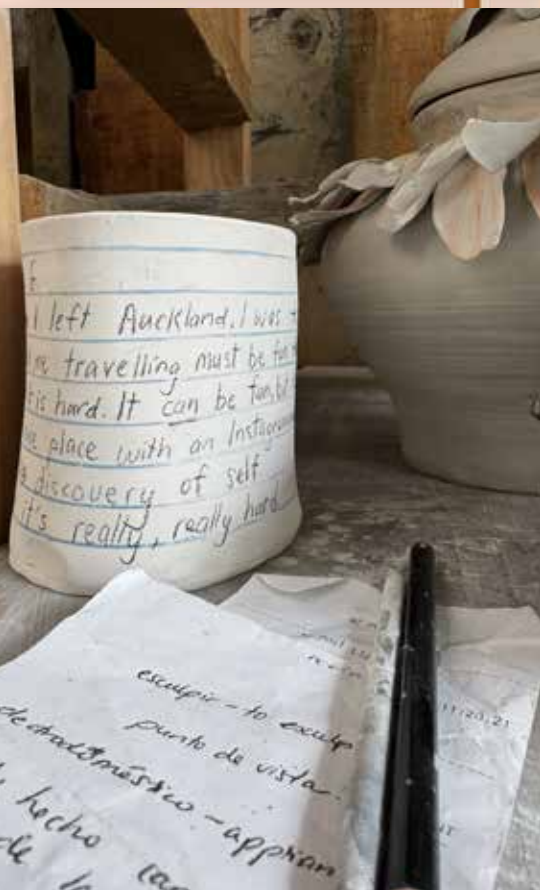


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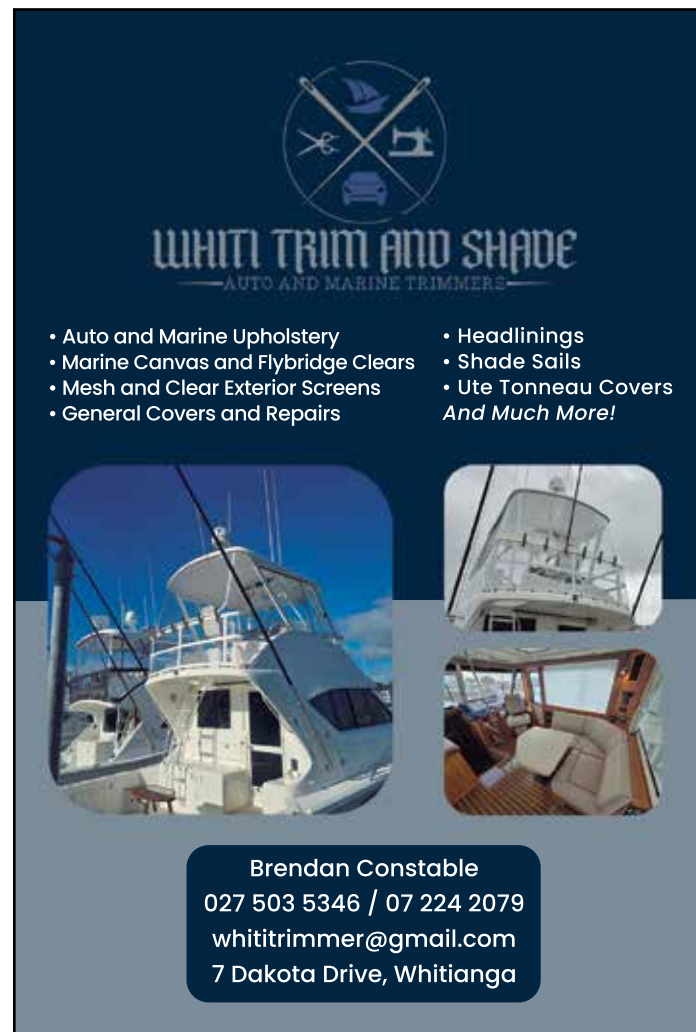


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That belief is at the heart of our marine education programme with Mercury Bay Area School, where we work with a year group to introduce students to the marine reserve – not just as a place to visit, but as a living ecosystem that needs care, understanding and respect.

The programme begins in the classroom, where students learn about the marine environment, local species, and why marine protection is so important. We cover conservation, marine safety, and the role marine reserves play in protecting biodiversity. This session lays the foundation, giving students the knowledge and curiosity they need before they step onto the water.

The real magic happens when that classroom is brought onto the glass bottom boat where students are able to see, first-hand, what they've been learning about. Through the glass panels, students see schools of fish, kelp forests, rocky reefs, and the intricate balance of life beneath the surface. For some children, it's their first time on a boat, or in the reserve, or seeing the underwater world for themselves.

In Term 2, 2025, we were proud to take 84 Year 6 students from Mercury Bay Area School out into the marine reserve. Here they continued to learn about the protected environment, identified the different marine species, and saw how marine life thrives when an area is carefully managed. Some lucky classes were even treated to the unforgettable experience of seeing dolphins.

Hands-on marine education is more than learning facts – it's about building understanding, respect and a sense of responsibility. We are incredibly lucky to have such an extraordinary marine reserve and the resources to explore it right on our doorstep, and we believe it's important for the younger generation to see and experience it.

Our hope is that this programme does more than teach children about fish and kelp. We want to inspire future conservationists, marine biologists, skippers, scientists and ocean advocates.

By educating our children today, we are investing in the future protection of Te Whanganui-o-Hei Marine Reserve. When young people understand why something matters, they are far more likely to stand up for it. And that is how lasting conservation begins – with knowledge, experience and a love for what lies beneath the surface.



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PHOTOGRAPHERS SERIES

Featuring Kate Beauchamp

Photography has been a lifelong passion, one that began in my teenage years and has continued to grow ever since. I live in Whitianga with my husband Andy and our cat, who rarely helps when I am trying to photograph birds! I studied Photography and Graphic Design at college in Torquay. Although my professional career led me on a corporate journey, the creative spark never left me. Today, I love dedicating my time to photography, allowing me to reconnect with the artistic side that has always been part of who I am.

In 2023, I was awarded Associateship honours by the Photographic Society of New Zealand, an internationally recognised distinction that celebrates photographic excellence. More recently, I became an accredited photography judge, sharing my experience by critiquing images for Camera Clubs nationwide. Closer to home, I'm involved in our local arts scene, both as a trustee of the Mercury Bay Art Escape and a participating artist. During this year's Open Studio Event, I'll be exhibiting my work at the GJ Gardner show home and I'm looking forward to meeting fellow art lovers. I also help run the Whitianga Photographic Club. These roles allow me to share my enthusiasm for photography with others, fostering connections and encouraging artistic growth within the community.

Birds have always held a special place in my heart. My fascination with them can be traced back to my dad, who was an avid 'twitcher' and instilled in me a sense of wonder for the natural world. Our back garden is a haven for a wide variety of my feathered friends and watching them sparked an idea: I wanted to capture their beauty with my camera, reminiscent of creative bird paintings.

My process begins with creating a 'stage'. Using props, many sourced from local op shops, and a plain sheet as a backdrop, I set the scene for my subjects. With a large lens, I can sit back at a distance, giving the birds plenty of space to move freely while I photograph them. Patience is essential; I often spend several hours shooting, followed by many more hours editing. From the hundreds of frames I capture, I select the one that truly 'sings' to me – a moment where the bird's character and the composition align perfectly.

I use Affinity Photo to edit my work, making enhancements such as sharpening, adjusting exposure, contrast, lifting shadows, cropping and cloning out unwanted elements. Yet my creative process does not end there. To achieve a more painterly quality, I overlay several images of textures drawn from my own library of photographs, for example tree bark, moss, and granite. Layering these textures over the top of my bird image transforms them, adding depth and atmosphere while retaining the authenticity of the bird itself.

This approach creates timeless works that blend photographic precision with a painterly aesthetic, honouring the birds in my garden and the joy of capturing their beauty.

My work can be seen on Instagram: [@katebeauchamp46](#)

Or on Facebook: Kate Beauchamp Photography

Words by
Kate Beauchamp

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PRIDE FROM THE COROMANDEL

Hāmiora Bailey and the Work of Holding Community

I was sipping tea at my aunt and uncle's house in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) when I clicked an article about 2026 Auckland Pride and Director Hāmiora Bailey. Inspired by the kid from Whangapoua I went to kindergarten with, I want to celebrate Coromandel Pride for us all.

Hāmiora Bailey (he/him/they/them) carries the Coromandel with him. Raised in Whangapoua and educated at Te Rerenga School, he is Ngāti Huarere and Ngāti Porou ki Harataunga, and is Director of Auckland Pride.

Most locals will remember Hāmiora as Sammy: Angie's boy, Sande's nephew, Win and Zim's moko. Growing up in Whangapoua, he was raised by grandparents and aunts in a small Lockwood home that was constantly full of whānau (family), friends and visitors. As Hāmiora describes it, "Daily life revolved around making tea, washing dishes, setting tables, feeding people, and being accountable through small acts of service and manaakitanga (hospitality). That was my first education."

That upbringing shaped a worldview grounded in care, responsibility, and whakapapa (genealogy). Through whānau, hapū, and iwi, Hāmiora learned that identity is not always something you invent, but something you inherit. Whangapoua, he says, is not a postcard but his ūkaipō – a place of return and belonging. With the passing of his grandmother, that connection has deepened, bringing a growing sense of guardianship

and responsibility for place and people.

Like many raised in the Coromandel, Hāmiora also grew up aware of the tension between paradise and reality. He saw how outsiders could arrive, consume the beauty of the place, and claim ownership over its stories while histories of raupatu (confiscation), burial grounds and whakapapa were ignored. That awareness later became essential when navigating life in Auckland, a city that often rewards speed and extraction over care and continuity.

Moving to Auckland allowed Hāmiora to better understand his sexuality and find community. His takatāpui (diverse gender/sexuality) whānau held him through transition, uncertainty and growth. On Karangahape Road, creative spaces like Lowtide became formative. "That is where my curatorial practice began, learning how to make space for others and care for a room full of people." These city communities reflected the same values Hāmiora was raised with in the Coromandel, and for a long time he kept those worlds separate in order to protect home. Now, he is learning to bring them together.

As Auckland Pride approaches the 40th anniversary of Homosexual Law Reform in 2026, Hāmiora sees the kaupapa Ngā Uri E! (a rallying call to descendants of activist movements) as both celebration and responsibility. "I wasn't there in 1986, but I'm here because of it." He describes himself as an uri (descendant) of the movement – shaped by the organisers, queens, unionists, and activists who pushed long before the law caught up. While legislation mattered, it did not magically make people safe, and the work has continued across generations. Māori and queer resistance, Hāmiora emphasises, are not separate stories but share whakapapa.

For Hāmiora, Pride doesn't need to look the same everywhere. In the Coromandel, the places where people already feel a sense of belonging – like art groups, sport teams, local groups, families – can also become spaces to explore gender, sexuality, and self-expression. Meaningful Pride grows from where people already gather, existing connections nurtured over time.

To young rainbow people in the Coromandel, Hāmiora offers reassurance: "You don't have to rush to become anything before you're ready to be yourself. Your whenua (land), your moana (sea), your people, they already know how to hold complexity, even if it doesn't always feel like it yet." He acknowledges that belonging can take time and that arriving into yourself can happen again and again. "There are people who came from where you are, who are thinking of you, backing you, and making space so that when you're ready, you'll have somewhere to land."

For Hāmiora, that journey continues. He looks forward to returning home, raising children, and contributing meaningfully to the place that raised him – the mountains, waterways, air, and community his ancestors have long cared for. Pride, in all its forms, begins there.



Words by
Ayana Piper-Healion

FOOT-TAPPING IN COLVILLE

The Music of John Veysey

A longstanding stalwart of the Colville music scene, John Veysey's musical talents have gone largely unnoticed. Veysey is a prolific singer-songwriter whose penchant for toe-tapping country/blues tunes with catchy hooks and riffs have made him much-loved by those who know him.

John Veysey grew up in Bournville, UK in the 1950s. He reminisces fondly on the musical climate at the time.

"After the second world war, the country was getting back on its knees in time to experience the wave of American music, 'black' music, which swept Europe in the 1950s. Up until then Mario Lanza and George Formby had ruled the waves. Frank Sinatra ruled them on the other side of the Atlantic. I grew up on popular classical music: Beethoven's and Schubert's symphonies, Strauss waltzes and Chopin on the piano. The symphonies produced pictures in my mind and the riffs stuck in my head. By the time I reached secondary school I was already a musical snob.

When singing parts were offered in operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan I turned them down at age 12. Was I really so snooty or was I simply terrified of going in front of a crowd? Whatever the reason, I was a big disappointment to my music teacher when I refused to join his choir let alone play 'Sweet Little Buttercup' in his production of *The Mikado*."

The explosion of rhythm and blues in the 1950s expanded Veysey's tastes.

"We got pop charts littered with Elvis Presley, the Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly and others.

The Everly Brothers and Buddy Holly produced the first pop songs to really take my ear. Three chords and a strident beat, but also great harmonies. In those days everyone understood how to play rhythm and blues and country music so I could sit down with any strange musician and expect to jam together successfully around a simple repetitive structure."

Veysey teamed up with a school friend to cover these popular songs.

"We learned Buddy Holly songs strumming on a couple of Spanish guitars. We took the pick-ups out of telephone hand-pieces and taped them to the top of the guitar soundboards with numerous electric strands sellotaped to an amp. In the school holidays we would turn up at a dance where a real band was playing and when they took a break, we'd get our guitars out and blast out a few songs with the band's drummer and bass-player who we'd never met."

After leaving school, Veysey did not pursue music for some time, opting to study Agriculture.

"I attended a middle-class privileged school, after which being a pop-singer was not considered a 'proper' career option. So followed 10 years of 'doing the right thing'; studying, qualifying, entering a 'good' career, marriage, children ... before I heard the call of popular music once again."

Veysey moved to New Zealand in 1967, settling in Wellington, where he initially worked on farms, then in TV production. Moving to the Coromandel eventuated because of an unprecedented catastrophe.

"At the end of 1976, my home was flooded out in the Hutt Valley and I moved to Coromandel to stay with some friends who had moved there after giving up the same career a year before me.

I listened to the latest music and jammed a bit with whoever played an instrument. I felt a drive to do more. I had the time. I blamed being in such an out-of-the-way place for my lack of musical fulfilment, surely I would find the right musicians in the big city. So, in 1979 I moved back to Wellington. I pulled players together, hired practice rooms – cheap in condemned central-Wellington buildings due for demolition."

In 1986, Veysey moved back to the Coromandel. This time, he more easily found musicians to play with, forming the band JV and the Rockers. The band played local gigs and made recordings of Veysey's original music.

"We became known as JV's Rockers by Coromandel locals from our beginnings in 1987. Personnel changed and we have not changed the name. Just haven't had a name other than JV's. Any band which I lead is called JV's."

The Rockers have gone through a variety of different lineups over the years. Veysey has released two albums, *You Can See a River* (2013) and *Kiwi on a Washing Line* (2024). He continues to write and record music. A third album is in the works.

"Each song begins with a strum of the guitar. Two chords back and forth in a certain rhythm. As I play it through, a string of words come along to enforce the rhythm so when the verbal line and chords are played together the song makes you tap your foot. I have a line to sing and a second line has to follow on and make sense. Only then do I find out what the song is about. The guitar riff is what the song is about and demands a solo. The fun for me is laying down a rhythm which makes the body swing, the foot tap. If that groove is laden with delicate or driving solos on any instrument and it's still a groove, I'm in heaven. The rest is secondary."

Words by
Nur Peach



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WHERE COROMANDEL COMES TO PLAY

Nearly Two Decades of Family Fun at Combat & Fun Zone Whitianga

Sandy and Eric are the proud owners of one of the Coromandel's most iconic holiday destinations. After 19 years of operation, Combat & Fun Zone will be refocusing on paintball only from mid-March 2026, moving to a new bookings-only system.

The journey began after a mystery weekend away on Waiheke Island, where the couple found themselves playing paintball with friends. They loved it. Sandy had worked in offices since leaving school but always felt drawn to the outdoors. They had the land, and in classic Kiwi fashion, decided to give it a crack.

That decision grew into something special. Just out of Whitianga, their park slowly filled with activities as ideas turned into reality. Side-by-side go karts, kids quad bikes, archery tag, splat master, slug guns, and the unforgettable eight-wheel amphibious Argo ride. Wild, wonderful, and loved by everyone.

The memories are many and the legacy runs deep. Families returned year after year, and Sandy and Eric watched kids grow from laser tag into full-on combat paintball. The screams from across the park, up the hills and through the bush during Argo rides are still talked about today. Kids famously referred to Eric as "the Argo Driver", and even in the supermarket the couple would hear, "Look, there's the Argo Driver!"

Over nearly two decades, Fun Zone Whitianga became a familiar and much-loved part of the community. They introduced the first Soccer Golf course in New Zealand and took pride in the gardens and native tree plantings around the park. Birthday parties were a hit, helped along by a bouncy castle originally bought for their granddaughter's second birthday. She's now 16. Time flies!

They also hosted public Easter egg hunts as fundraisers for local groups. Those grew so popular they eventually had to stop. There were pony rides, animals roaming the grounds, and guest favourites Eddie and Donut. It was always about creating experiences and bringing people together.

But times change, and so do family holidays. "We loved making it fun for others," says Sandy, "but 19 years of a fun business also means 19 years of no summers for us to enjoy time with family and friends." With pop-up businesses now offering seasonal entertainment and rising pressures around staffing, Sandy and Eric knew it was time to reassess.

The good news is there is still a solid chunk of summer ahead. Visitors and locals are encouraged to come and enjoy the full range of activities before the shift to paintball-only from mid March. "The Group Combo is a great family option at just \$35 per person," Sandy says. "And archery is something we absolutely love teaching. It's not easy to find places offering it anymore."

From now on Combat & Fun Zone will operate on a bookings-only system. Sandy recommends calling at least 24 hours ahead, "just in case we're out fishing or on the golf course."

Combat & Fun Zone has created long-lasting memories for whānau across Aotearoa and travellers from all over the world. Their glowing reviews reflect genuine hospitality, meaningful interactions, and a place that people remember fondly.

When asked how she hopes people will remember the legacy of Combat & Fun Zone, Sandy laughs. "Well, along with the bruises, I hope they leave with a smile, great photos, and everlasting memories."

There's still time to make a few more. Get your whānau and friends together and book a visit with Eric and Sandy. One more heads-up, the business will be going by Combat Zone only soon, but it's still lots of fun.

Words by
Leo Magri

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WOOSH!

Another Kererū Flies Past with Precision! ... unless followed by a loud bang



How much do we know about our native pigeons (Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae) known as kererū?

They are important seed dispersers. Since the extinction of the moa, kererū is the only bird species big enough to swallow large fruit, such as those of karaka, miro, tawa and taraire, and disperse the seed over long distances. The disappearance of these birds could be a disaster for the regeneration of our native forests. Nationally, the kererū population is considered to be stable but its numbers are gradually declining.

Kererū are large birds and can measure up to 51 cm from tail to beak, and weigh about 650 grams. No wonder that, when they hit your window, they can do serious damage to themselves.

Kererū have an extremely disconcerting habit of suffering from impact injuries – being hit by cars while flying low (often fully laden) across roads or flying into windows or glass balustrades.

Window strike often occurs when birds perceive a LINE OF FLIGHT through one window of your home and out another. This also occurs on buildings with corners made of glass or when birds see SKY or TREES reflected in your windows.

This may occur on certain windows or areas of a window based on the season, time of day, or orientation to the sun.

Interestingly, flight speed and force calculations suggest that a 570 g kererū would collide with 3-70 times the force that smaller birds (5-180 g) would.

This may explain why the injuries observed in kererū differ from those in smaller species of birds. While smaller birds can sometimes just take off after being stunned, window collisions in kererū have far more serious injuries.

Impacts usually cause trauma to the head, fractured beaks, fractures or dislocations of the coracoids and clavicles, and ruptured internal organs. Fractured coracoids can damage flight muscles and rupture the heart. Additionally, extensive bruising of pectoral muscles and lung haemorrhaging occurs due to the force of impact.

Kererū on the ground that can be approached, but look fine on the outside, are rarely just stunned or resting. They often have injuries and can therefore be preyed on by cats, dogs or mustelids unless rescued and taken into care.

During Lockdown in 2020, we admitted well over 35 kererū in one month, and sadly not all of them made it back into the wild.

All kererū were first stabilised after arriving; once first aid and pain relief had been administered, they were taken to the x-ray department at the Whitianga Vets. A correct diagnosis was important to make a recovery plan. Often we would consult Massey University Wildbase, sending them the x-rays to get a prognosis. Most needed bandages to stabilise a fractured wing or shoulder, repairs to a ruptured crop (food holding pouch), beak repairs or just cage rest.

Caring for kererū isn't simple. The appropriate type of housing, food and care is very specific for each species of bird.

To the right is 'Hamish' (always named after the rescuer, for easier identification) who flew into a window and suffered a fractured lower jaw. Under anaesthetic, a tube was inserted through the skin into the crop so we could feed Hamish with liquid food while the jaw was healing. Hamish made a full recovery and was released after two months. Kererū were often long-term patients, as their injuries tend to be significant and take time to heal.

Our criteria for release were:

- 1 Courses of medication and treatments were completed and injuries had healed.
- 2 The bird was observed to be flying properly, and able to gain vertical lift.
- 3 The bird had a good body weight and body condition.
- 4 The feathers were in good condition.
- 5 The bird was physically and behaviourally able to fully function in the wild, and was not imprinted on people.

“ Since the extinction of the moa, kererū is the only bird species big enough to swallow large fruit, such as those of karaka, miro, tawa and taraire, and disperse the seed over long distances. ”



After release from Kūaotunu, some would stay around for some time. We would leave food out for them until they disappeared. Two kererū were released together where they were initially found (more than 90 kilometres up north) and in the following days, both of them were back in our tree. That told us to just release them here as they fly great distances and will find their way anyway. All native birds received a certified DOC band with a number registered with the DOC banding scheme, so we could always identify them if they got into trouble again.

We have many stories and hold memories of our dear kererū over the years.

When you find an injured bird, call the DOC hotline 0800 362468 for instructions.



Words by
Annemieke Kregting

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PHOTOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND MEMORIES OF THE PAST

The word photography comes from the Greek *phōs* meaning light, and *graphé* meaning drawing or writing. So, photography literally means drawing or writing with light.

During the goldrush era in Thames, visiting and local photographers captured images of the rapidly developing town and its inhabitants, and a number of photographic studios were established such as: Henry Albert Frith, 1869-1878; the Foy Brothers, 1872-1886; and William Henry Reed, 1872-1878.

So, what prompted the desire to be photographed? Unlike painted portraits or pictures created in black and white silhouette form, photography was relatively cheap, took less time in comparison, and was available to a wider demographic. Photos were a way of preserving memories and everyday life, and a visual means of telling stories, preserving one's identity and personality, and capturing moments in time. Photos were often sent to family and friends back home, providing a visual insight into the lives of those who had dared to travel to far-off lands in the hope of a better life. They also provided comfort and a sense of connection, as for most, it was unlikely they would meet up with distant families again.

One of the most important characteristics of photography was its immediacy. The goldfields of Thames and the Coromandel Peninsular were rich in opportunities to capture everyday life through the camera lens, and record historical events as they happened – information that would be of great value to future archaeologists, and historians.

The first written account about light reflections and image, is credited to the Chinese philosopher, Mozi, in approximately 400 BCE. Around 530 AD, Anthemius of Tralles was one of the first in recorded history to use a darkened chamber to explore optical phenomena, and in 1685 Johann Zahn invented the first portable camera. In 1727, the German professor of anatomy, Johann Schulze, proved the darkening of silver salts was caused by light not heat – thus providing, along with the concept of the camera obscura, the basic technology necessary for photography. The camera obscura means *darkened chamber*, a device where light passing through a small hole projects an

inverted image onto a surface. However, little progress was made until Joseph Nicéphore Niépce took the first photo in 1814, thus both Zahn and Niépce sharing credit for the invention of the first working camera.

By 1839, Louis Daguerre was capturing permanent images on metal and paper. George Eastman made cameras simple and easy to use for the masses with the popular Kodak in 1888, which used spool-wound photographic film and had a press button mechanism. The movie camera became a reality in the mid-1890s, followed by the Brownie camera in 1900. Then came 35mm film and colourisation, instant Polaroid cameras, and eventually digital cameras. A digital camera prototype was developed in 1975, with the first commercially available digital cameras appearing in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The 1990s and beyond saw cameras becoming smaller, cheaper and faster, leading them to be a component of most smartphones. Software was also readily available to process, edit and enhance digital photos at home, on personal computers.

Whether you are an enthusiastic photographer, or a lover of artefacts in general, Thames Museum Te Whare Taonga o te Kauaeranga has an extensive collection of cameras through the decades, from the 1886 Lancaster Special Instantograph camera, to the Agfa Synchro box camera, Eastman Kodak Bull's Eye, Kodak Instamatic 155X, Minolta Autopak-8 D6 movie camera and more.

In 2026, photography continues to be a means of documenting human experience, and capturing a visual history of people, places and events. The camera obscura was the beginning of the camera evolution. What is the future of photography in this rapidly changing technological world we live in, and will artificial intelligence play a part?

Words by Robyn Pearce

Volunteer, Thames Museum Te Whare Taonga o te Kauaeranga





TEN YEARS STRONG

EVOLUTION FITNESS: BUILT BY COMMUNITY

If these walls could talk, they would tell stories of early mornings, nervous first sessions, quiet breakthroughs, and moments of pride that never make it onto a leaderboard. They would speak of the hard days too – the sessions that took everything, the mental battles fought quietly, and the courage it takes just to walk through the door. Above all, they would tell the story of a community that showed up – again and again.

Ten years ago, we took over a small local gym with a big vision: to build something meaningful, grounded in people, not just training. From the very beginning, this journey has been shaped by trust, continuity, and shared values – a foundation that has guided every step forward.

What began as a modest gym has grown into a thriving hub for movement, connection, and growth, now proudly home to Toa Martial Arts. Together, the gym and dojo have become spaces where confidence is built, resilience is forged, and whānau find belonging – from tamariki finding their feet on the mats to members who return year after year, no matter the season.

This milestone belongs to every person who believed in us and walked alongside us through change. To our members, families, staff, coaches, and the wider Whitianga community – He mihi nui ki a koutou (A massive thank you!). Your aroha, loyalty, and consistency have carried us through every challenge and triumph.

Our kaupapa has always been about more than fitness. It's about manaakitanga (caring for one another), whanaungatanga (fostering relationships), and creating a place where people feel seen, supported, and strong – inside and out.

We are forever grateful. We love this journey, we are proud of how far we've come, and we are deeply honoured to continue serving the community that has made Evolution Fitness & Toa Martial Arts what they are today.

Happy 10th birthday, Evolution Fitness – and thank you, Whitianga, for every step of the journey.

Ngā mihi maioha



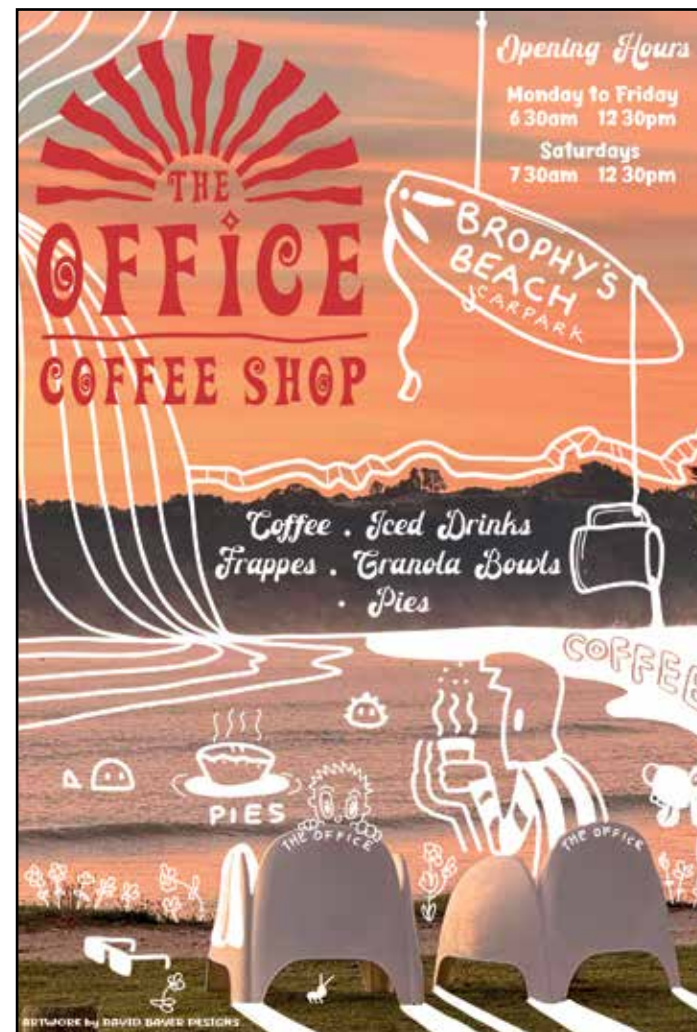
Words by
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