

COROMIND



Issue 40

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The Future We're
Handing Over

Tears for a Dolphin

A Moment Shared
Beneath the Surface

When Thames Met Mercury Bay

Young Couples Choosing the
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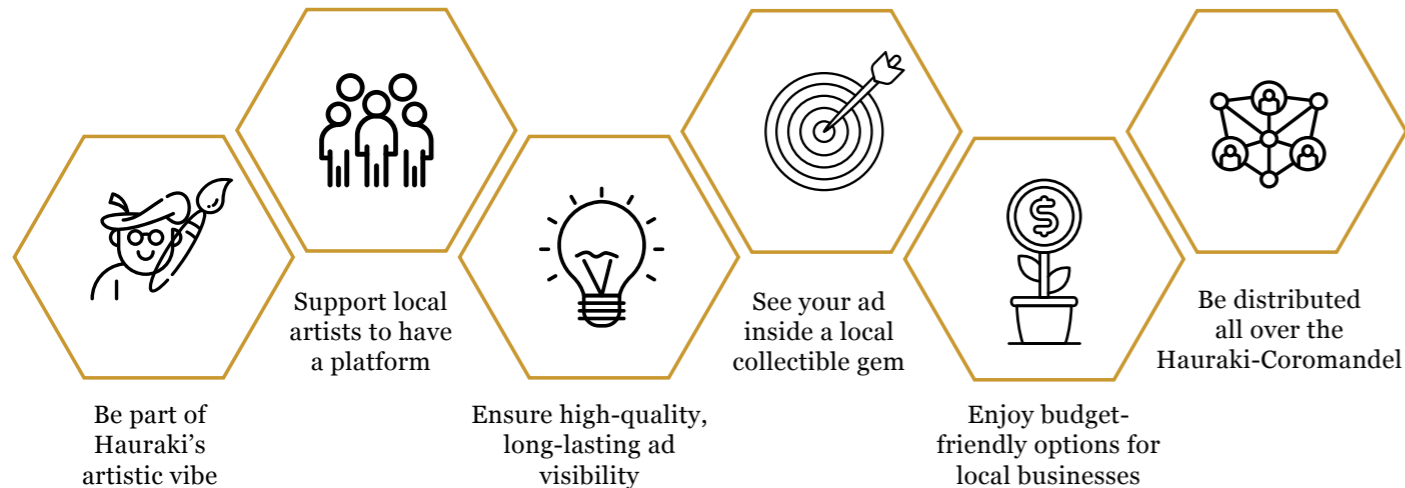
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Saskia Riemersma

Saskia Riemersma's journey is a testament to the power of creativity and following one's passion. From a young age, Saskia knew she wanted to create, and her path has been a beautiful exploration of various art forms.

As an enrolled nurse for seven years, Saskia's caring nature and attention to detail laid the foundation for her future artistic endeavors. But it was her training as a florist that led to a life-changing move to New Zealand with her husband Jelte and two children in 1989. Settling in Matamata, Saskia dove into the world of floral art, becoming an active member of the Matamata Floral Festival Art Society and creating stunning arrangements.

Her artistic expression didn't stop there. Saskia's curiosity led her to sculpture, and in 1992, she took part in the Matamata Sculpture Symposium. Her piece, *Embrace*, was chosen by the township and placed on Broadway, a beautiful testament to her skill.

As Saskia continued to explore her creativity, she started painting and attending life drawing classes. Her love of learning led her to the Learning Connection (TLC), where she honed her skills in bronze sculpture and life drawing. In 2010, the move to Coromandel marked a new chapter, with Saskia dedicating more time to painting, first with watercolours and later with pastels.

Now, Saskia's art is a vibrant reflection of her surroundings – people, animals, and the stunning natural beauty of Coromandel. She's a member of PANZ (Pastel Artists of New Zealand) and regularly attends workshops, always seeking inspiration and connection with fellow artists.


"I am inspired by everything around me," Saskia says. "I enjoy working with more than one medium in an artwork – watercolour, ink, and pastel – the possibilities are endless!"

Saskia's art has been showcased in exhibitions, and she's delighted to share her passion with others through Coromandel Open Studios Arts Tour, where she enjoys meeting people and selling her work.

With a creative spirit and a wealth of experience, Saskia Riemersma continues to weave her magic, inspiring all who see her art.

You can contact Saskia at: saskiariegersma@gmail.com or see her at Rose's Gallery in Coromandel Town (860 Tiki Road).



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A LONG WAY TO THE PINNACLES

A Solo Walk, a Sleepless Night, & a 4:30am Decision

I like the night, but night owls are stealthier than me – and that's a problem. I get the urge for a treat sometimes, especially when the rare visitor comes along. I'm willing to take risks to get what I want.

I smelled it one evening when an overnight camper arrived. An obsessively delightful sweetness – maybe dried fruit. I knew it would be dangerous to try until she was asleep. I waited, and waited. The camper was a poor sleeper, so it wasn't until four in the morning that I began gnawing through the wall of the tent. It was too noisy. She sat bolt upright and turned on her light. Most people go back to sleep. Instead, she started packing and took the food away. My chance was gone. I scurried back to my nest of leaves to wait for the next camper.



I don't know anyone who would willingly do what that rat did – take such foolish risks – but the irony wasn't lost on me as I set off alone in the dark, on day two of a solo hike.

I started at Broken Hills in the Coromandel and walked up to Hihi Trig Station, taking a small detour to an old dam along the way. The views were lovely, stretching across to the cliffs where I sometimes go rock climbing. Then the mud began. At one point I sank into the track up to my waist. The downhill sections saw me scrambling down banks by clinging to tree roots.

I reached the pristine campsite – accessible to the semi-intrepid by a one-hour walk from the nearest road – and met a solo hiker who was doing it right. She had walked up to camp, spent the night, walked to the Pinnacles and back, and now intended to spend the afternoon reading and snoozing. Then two women in their twenties swept in, pitched a tent, and rushed off, hoping to reach the Pinnacles by sunset. They invited me to join them.

It tore me up not to go. My logical side won: You're recovering from shin splints. That wasn't the plan. The evil voice inside me whispered that I'd repeat the entire miserable mud-fest one day just to satisfy my curiosity. I didn't go.

That night, after much obsessing, I made up my mind to go up to the Pinnacles early the next day. I packed a small bag for the morning while I burned with questions. Could I have done it that day? When a rat gnawing at my tent woke me, I gave up on sleep and left camp at 4:30 am, walking in the dark to have breakfast at the Pinnacles by 7:30 am.

The view was spectacular. A pink glow spread through a wispy cloud over the land, and I was alone at the top. The sunrise crowds from the Pinnacles Hut had already gone. I lingered for ages, legs dangling over a quiet ledge that might otherwise have inspired a concerned citizen to tell me what not to do.

Back at camp before 11 am, my tent still stood. I faced a decision. Logic said rest and stay another night – if I had enough food. I was hungry. Two women stopped for morning tea and mentioned they'd brought too much food. My old self might have asked. Instead, I hesitated. I had dinner for that night, but the next day would have been a caloric deficit – not the day to start intermittent fasting.

I decided to walk out that afternoon.

I took it slowly, mindful of injury. I hadn't seen anyone on the track the day before; it wasn't popular, and it could be a week before someone passed through again. I carried an emergency locator beacon but hoped never to use it after the last time – a rock had cracked my skull during a descent from a climb. I didn't want to be a frequent flyer.

In the end, the rat and I weren't so different – both weighing hunger against danger.

Words by
Rachael Mayne

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Tears for a Dolphin

A Moment Shared Beneath the Surface

It was the mid-1990s and we were steaming back from Aotea/Great Barrier. It was a beautiful hot summer day and the sea was flat and calm. Up ahead we spotted a pod of about 20 Terehu/Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). We headed towards them to check them out. Dolphins are either feeding, resting or playing. We slowly approached the pod and they came to the boat and swam around us and we could see they were in play mode.

We quickly donned masks and snorkels and slipped into the warm water. As soon as we entered, they were all around us. They were doing barrel rolls, swimming on their backs, blowing bubbles and doing spectacular leaps into the air landing back in the water right next to us! They were having some serious fun!

I noticed there was one dolphin that was not participating in playing and as I watched I saw she had a calf with her, a baby about a metre long. Thrilled to see a mother and calf, I swam towards them. When I got closer, I saw that the baby had an old, frayed rope wrapped around its tail. It looked like it had been there a long time as it was embedded into the flesh and the wound looked deep and ugly.

I immediately turned and did the fastest swim of my life back to the boat and screamed out for a knife. I was handed a dive knife and I swam back and quickly found the mother and calf. I thought that if I could cut the rope off, I could save the baby. The mother saw me coming towards them and swam underneath her baby and lifted it onto her head and swam away from me. It was then that I realised the calf couldn't swim without help from its mother. The rope had cut so deep it couldn't move its tail properly. After a short distance she stopped and released her baby and turned and looked directly at me. I kept swimming towards her all the while trying to somehow telepathically let her know I was trying to help.

As I closed the distance, she turned and lifted the calf onto her head again and moved away, but more quickly this time. I was getting exhausted, but I wasn't going to give up. She eventually stopped and put her baby back on the surface and turned to look at me again. It was then that I felt something had changed. I stopped swimming and hung in the water, both of us looking at each other.

New Zealand bottlenose dolphins are among the largest in the world, growing to 600 kilos and four metres. They can accelerate instantly to over 35 kph. She charged straight at me. I felt no fear even though I knew if she hit me I would not survive. I kept trying to project into her mind the thought: I want to help your baby.

She kept coming, several hundred kilos of angry dolphin. At the last possible moment, she veered away and just missed me. I could feel the pressure wave as she sped past. She turned around and slowly swam past me back to her calf and started moving away. I was determined to keep on trying to help even as I was getting more and more tired.

The mother was now about 30 metres in front when she stopped and pushed her calf back to the surface. She turned and looked at me. I knew what was coming and stopped swimming as well. Again, she charged towards me with incredible speed. This time she missed me by mere centimetres. It was so close my mask was dislodged.

She turned around and stopped a few metres from me. We stared at each other and I swear we were communicating. We were inside each other's heads. I was pleading to let me help, she was telling me that she knew her baby was hurt and to leave them alone. I reluctantly told her I would stop and leave them be. She gave me one last look and went back to her calf and they started moving away. I watched until they disappeared then began the long slow swim back to the boat.

I handed up the knife and climbed back on board. I found a quiet corner and sat down and cried. I wondered if there was anything more I could have done to help. I couldn't accept what she already knew, that her baby could not be saved.

The last we saw of the pod was as they swam away. At the back was a lone dolphin carrying a baby on its head trying to keep up. Thirty years later, I still cry whenever I think about it. It remains one of the most profound experiences of my life.

Words by Peter Levy

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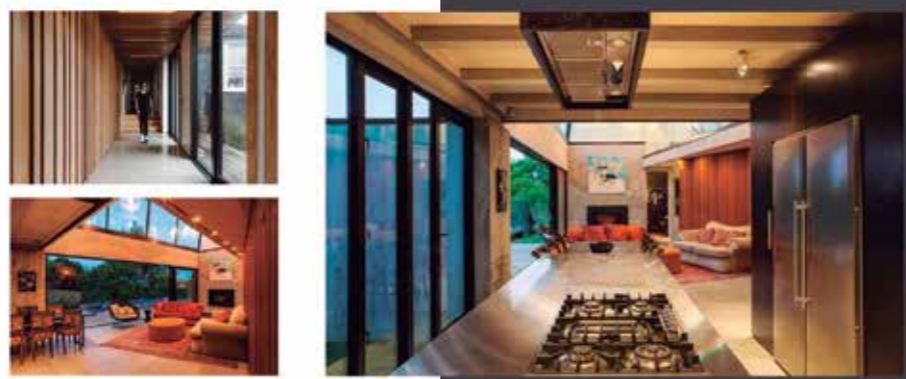
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WALKING THE HILLS WITH WILLIAM TOWNSON

TEACHING THE LAND TO A GENERATION

The following is a glimpse into the life of William Lewis Townson – a man who was dedicated to his botanical work, and had an expert knowledge of the native birds of New Zealand. He was also interested in Māori customs, and was a collector of Māori artefacts. Because the North Island had been well examined, William's search for rare and interesting native plants was mainly carried out in the South Island. Besides his botanical interests, William was a good chess player, holding the championship cup of the Thames Chess Club, was active in the church, took a great interest in good literature and gardening, and had a great love for music.

William Lewis Townson was born on 23 May 1855, to Benjamin Townson, a surgeon and physician of Liverpool, and Mary Ann Townson née Thorpe. Both William's parents were devout Quakers. It is likely William's love of the outdoors, and his interest in botany, was nurtured by his father. William's brother Charley spent some time as a patient at the Seaforth Sanatorium, where he was being treated for tuberculosis. When William's father visited the family in Seaforth, he would take his children on long hikes, roaming the fields of Litherland and the Crosby sandhills, explaining the interesting flora of the area to his children.

On 28 October 1878, William arrived in Port Chalmers, New Zealand aboard the ship *Mataura*. Originally training with a view to qualifying for medicine, Townson chose to become a pharmaceutical chemist, and was registered as a chemist and druggist on 6 July 1888. He was 33 years of age. He married Lucinda (Lucy) Dagg, 24 June 1889. Lucy was born in Masterton, and was one of ten children of Irish parents, Robert and Lucinda Dagg. William opened the Central Pharmacy and Dispensary in Palmerston Street, Westport, and in June 1890 their daughter Lucinda was born.

By July 1917, now aged 62, Townson was living in Thames, New Zealand, having taken over the pharmacy of the late John William Hall. Townson continued his search for interesting and rare species around Thames and the Coromandel. He sent his good friend, Thomas Frederick Cheeseman, all his specimens to be carefully studied and



identified, and talked with great enthusiasm about the kauri which he described as "the noblest of trees".

William organised a Rambling Club for the students of Thames High School who, under his guidance, developed a keen interest in botany. For many years, on a weekly basis, the students followed him through the bush and over the hills, searching for rare and beautiful native specimens – Mr Townson informing the students of their botanical and English names, and describing them in great detail. During the Christmas school holidays, a competition for the best collection of flora was organised by the school. Mr William Hammond, a teacher at Thames Central school and a very keen botanist himself, judged the event. The winner was F.G. Short, whose display featured over 200 specimens, some rare and valuable, gathered from as far afield as Cape Colville and Mercury Bay.

William Townson died on 11 August 1926, aged 71 years. Amongst the beautiful floral offerings that covered his bier, none were more so than those gathered and arranged by the pupils of Thames High School, and members of the school Rambling Club. Their heartfelt floral contributions were a symbol of respect for their mentor, guide and friend Mr Townson, and a testimony to the man who taught them so much about the flora of New Zealand. William is buried in Shortland Cemetery. His wife, Lucinda, died on January 12 1944 and is buried in the same plot.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that William Lewis Townson contributed on a large scale to the knowledge of New Zealand botany. His beloved hills, mountains and forests were his source of joy.

Words by Robyn Pearce
Volunteer, Thames Museum Te Whare Taonga o te Kauaeranga

Further reading: A Most Delightful Pursuit, William Lewis Townson, his life and works, compiled by Ian St George, istge@yahoo.co.nz, <http://onadmiralroad.co.nz/>. ISBN 979-0-473-67135-8. Reference: Seaforth Sanatorium - (Lancet, 21 April 1906, p. 1142; Northern Star and Farmers Chronicle, 23 Jan.1908, p.5); Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of NZ, 1928, page 186; Find a Grave NZ, <http://www.findagrave.com>



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ANOTHER STRING TO OUR BOW

CREATIVITY, COURAGE AND CONNECTION WITH MERCURY BAY PERFORMING ARTS

There are many great initiatives run by the parents, volunteers and businesses who dedicate their time to living and thriving on the Coromandel Peninsula. Across our communities you'll find sporting clubs where kids play, explore and embrace the incredible outdoor opportunities available to them. These spaces help young people build resilience, teamwork and confidence while enjoying the environment we are so lucky to call home.

But thriving communities also create space for quieter pursuits. Chess clubs, reading groups and other indoor activities give young people a place to develop focus, imagination and conversation skills while disappearing into the worlds of fiction and non-fiction.

In recent years, another creative outlet has been growing across Mercury Bay – the performing arts.

Back in 2024, I gathered together a small group of local parents, grandparents, teachers and former students who recognised a gap in our towns. While there were many opportunities in sport and academics, structured opportunities in performing arts – acting, singing and dancing – were limited.

From that conversation, Mercury Bay Performing Arts was born.

The performing arts open a new world for young people. Through rehearsals, stagecraft and storytelling, our tamariki (children) learn to express themselves in creative and courageous ways. Alongside directors, vocal coaches and choreographers – as well as costume, make-up, sound and lighting teams – students discover that a production is much more than what happens on stage. It's a true collaboration where every role matters.

In 2025 we staged our first major production, Disney's *Aladdin Jr.* Across eight shows we sold out every performance, with audiences responding with cheers, smiles and standing ovations. For our young performers, it was the reward for months of commitment, teamwork and growth.

That success inspired us to dream even bigger.

This year Mercury Bay Performing Arts proudly presents Disney's *Beauty and the Beast Jr.*, featuring more than 50 local students on stage – and many more working behind the scenes.

Our cast ranges from 8 to 18 years old and represents seven schools across the region, from Pauanui to Te Rerenga. Many are involved in sports and other activities, but several times a week they come together with a shared goal: creating something special for a live audience.

Watching these young people grow in confidence, friendships and self-belief has been one of the most rewarding parts of this journey. Performing arts help students step outside their comfort zones, discover new strengths and develop skills that will stay with them long after the curtain closes.

Like many people who live here, I proudly say, "This is my town." Mercury Bay Performing Arts is a not-for-profit organisation built on community spirit, with volunteers working to create positive opportunities for our youth.

We would love the wider community to come along and enjoy the show. Tickets for Disney's *Beauty and the Beast Jr.* are now on sale.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to the businesses and organisations who have stepped forward to support the production and help make these opportunities possible for our young performers.

Words by **Fabian Roberts and the Mercury Bay Performing Arts**



Last year, after making a very last-minute decision to join Mercury Bay Performing Arts with a friend, I was offered the exciting opportunity of a role in *Aladdin Jr.*, and what started off as yet another after-school commitment, quickly turned into one of my most rewarding experiences.

Beauty and The Beast Jr. will be my last musical here in Whitianga; however, in only two years I already feel like I have learnt so much, and a whole new form of creativity has been introduced to me. Just last year, I couldn't even imagine singing anywhere but on roadtrips, let alone in front of hundreds of people. Rehearsals are always filled with laughter, collaboration, and the shared beauty of bringing a story to life. However, my favourite part will always be watching and supporting the other students grow into their voices and confidence.

Productions provide young people with an environment to express themselves, which is always needed in any community. It brings tamariki from all across the Whitianga area together with a shared goal, whilst promoting unity and all forms of creativity. I cannot wait to see just how far we've come when we perform *Beauty and The Beast Jr.* on stage in May. Everyone has worked so hard, and I am so, so grateful to have a place here.

Words by Isabella White

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Jiwa: Soul, Spirit, Vital Force

Who Gets to Live by the Sea

Continuing on from Part 1 ...

I bought trimaran *Jiwa* in the year 2000. Apart from the odd bit of rot in the deck which has needed repair, there have been no problems over the 25 years I have sailed her around the north-east coast of the North Island. I have pulled her out of the water onto a hard stand every seven years for a decent refit. The first two times were at Little Shoal Bay near Auckland's harbour bridge, where I met some interesting characters.

One was Andrew Fagan, a well-known Kiwi rock star of the 70s and lead singer of The Mockers, who recently performed at Coroglen Tavern. Andrew is also a remarkable solo sailor. He sailed his tiny 5.4 metre yacht *Swirly World* to Australia; to the Kermadec islands, 1000 kilometres north of NZ; to the Auckland Islands, around 350 kilometres south of Rakiura/Stewart Island; and more recently into the depths of the notoriously rough Southern Ocean where sadly he was forced to abandon *Swirly World* to the mercy of the sea due to gear failure, during an attempt to sail the smallest boat single-handed, non-stop around the world. What strength of character and bravery it would take to embark on such adventures. I would highly recommend his *Swirly World* books for those of you who love tales of the ocean.

Another interesting chap was Bob who had Romani ancestry and dreamed of one day voyaging back to Europe to experience the wandering lifestyle of his ancestors. I remember us sharing the rare view one day of a very large digger being driven across the Little Shoal Bay mudflats to help a 4-wheel-drive that had become stuck in mud. Unfortunately, the digger also got stuck and the driver's efforts to try and dig his way out only served to make it sink deeper into the unforgiving mud. The driver was a member of the local yacht club which could not afford to replace the \$300,000 machine which they had hired. Bob and I could do nothing but stand on the shore as the tide came in and watch as the bright yellow digger was slowly submerged until at high tide, all you could see was the bucket sticking out above the green water. Part of me had to stifle a smile at the ridiculous humour of the situation. Fortunately, after many a legal argument, the club's insurance company agreed to cover the loss. Unfortunately, a few years later, citing environmental concerns, local councils closed down several haul-out facilities in Auckland Harbour which catered for us less wealthy boat owners, including the one at Little Shoal Bay which had served as a boat maintenance facility for 80 years.

The slip at Putiki Bay on Waiheke Island escaped the closures and still caters for low budget boats like *Jiwa*. I have just returned

from there after carrying out her latest seven-yearly refit. What an interesting bay. It is very tidal and is home to a wide variety of vessels – multi-hulls like *Klis II* which sit on dry mudflats during low tides, houseboats with onboard gardens and others which are less cared for – abandoned hulls slowly rotting into the mangroves. All kinds of craft housing all kinds of people. There are people living on boats in many of the bays on Waiheke's southern coast. I think that council seems to turn a blind eye to some of the domicile regulations, given the shortage of affordable accommodation for the less well-off, and the ridiculously high average house price of \$3.62 million, a figure brought about by the high demand for luxury homes on coastal property near our biggest city, spurred along by the absence of a wealth and capital gains tax. The rich get richer while the locals can't afford to live there. Such is the way of the world at present. Let's hope we find a more equitable way to share resources without a violent backlash as has happened in centuries gone by.

The three weeks I spent there were made more enjoyable by these boat-dwelling residents, some of whom suffered from substance abuse and other related issues, but who would always offer me help if they saw I needed it. I wasn't keen on saying thank you to one alcohol-dependent helper by giving him a 6-pack of beer, so after borrowing his sander for a few days when mine died, I offered him a bag of organic vegetables I had picked from my sister Sally's garden. He looked at them and said with a cheeky smile on his face, "I don't eat vegetables, but I drink Speight's cider." What can you do? Suffice it to say he didn't eat vegetarian that night. There were others whose morning tea was usually brown and fizzy and one or two that shared a morning P pipe.

It was the first time in 25 years I had sailed *Jiwa* back into Putiki Bay where I first met her. Bernard, her designer, and Wayne who built her came aboard and we shared stories of boat design, boat building and of course, of some of my multiple adventures aboard *Jiwa*. After three weeks of scraping, sanding, fibre-glassing and painting by my sister Sally and her husband Alan (both of whom went beyond the call of duty), and me, *Jiwa* was ready to go back in the water. The slip master Pete, who has volunteered his services to Waiheke Boat Club for 20 years, expertly manoeuvred *Jiwa* down the ramp with his tractor, a tricky and somewhat stressful operation for all, and all he asked for was a box of Heineken.

The next morning, taking advantage of a 20-knot tail wind, accompanied by my lovely partner, crew and chef Sumi, we



sailed out of Putiki Bay and headed for Port Jackson where we hunkered down for a sleepless night in 35 knots of wind sweeping down off Mount Moehau. The next morning gifted us glassy calm seas. We motored through Colville Channel and were surrounded by diving gannets and a few common dolphins. Gradually, more and more dolphins arrived and played on our bow wave. They were all quite small and some were accompanied by even smaller young ones that jumped playfully out of the ocean right beside us. Alan and I had been met by dolphins on the way up to Waiheke, so *Jiwa* was twice blessed to also have their company on the return journey. I like to think it had something to do with their liking the meaning of her name, *Jiwa* – soul, spirit, vital force. Safe sailing to all of you who answer the call of the ocean.

Words by
Ross Liggins

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WHEN I'M 40...


THE FUTURE WE'RE HANDING OVER

You are reading the 40th issue of Coromind, a milestone for us, and we do want to acknowledge our community, supporters, and advertisers for being on this journey with us.

But one of the reasons we create this magazine is to empower young people, so they can rest assured that there are people out there who back them and believe they can do whatever they want to do. We do need to listen to them though...

So we asked young people in our region: how do you think the world will be when you are 40?

HERE ARE SOME OF THEIR ANSWERS...



Naomi Bell, 17
"I think climate change will get to a point that is irreversible, and we'll probably have to move out into space, like to Mars or something... What's not to love about that?..."

Dylan Field, 12
"Everything will be much more expensive. The world will be worse because of rubbish and all... We should have more dumps, pick up the rubbish, and put it in the bin!"

Tom Lamason, 17
"I feel like there will be towns and cities out in space. There will probably be rubbish everywhere, and that will be pretty bad. I think I'm realistic about things — there will be a lot of rubbish, but I think we'll be able to sort it out at some point."

Daniel Vaughan, 14
"I think lots of jobs are gonna be taken over, as expected, but one job I don't think will be taken over is hairdressing and barbering. And when I'm 40, I'm either gonna be the next Michael Jackson, an NBA player, or just a grumpy old man."

Jackson Goodall, 16
"The way that we are going, there might not be much nature left. Nothing to look forward to. Mining in the Coromandel is a good example; I think people need to put the Earth before themselves because we're all gonna be gone after a while, but (the Earth) is gonna be here for the next generation, so look after it."

Marlo Cosgrove, 11
"I reckon pollution will grow by a substantial amount, and our oxygen will decline with a plummeting number. If we don't find a way to go to space, we're done. I don't really like robots, but I reckon there will be heaps of them doing human chores for lazy people."

Aila Wills, 12
"I think the world will be overrun by pumpkins! Technology will be quite advanced, considering what we already have. There will be alliances: pumpkins are going to be the main bodies, and robot arms, legs, and brains will come out of them. They are going to take over!"


Jamie Armour, 16
"I think the wars are gonna stop when I'm 40."

SCAN TO WATCH THE INTERVIEWS




It can be confronting — even a little surprising — to see how heavy and uncertain the future looks through the eyes of our young people. Beneath their imagination and humour, there's a clear thread of concern about the world they're inheriting. Maybe that should make us pause. What are we showing them through our choices, our conversations, and the way we engage with the world? Because whether we realise it or not, they are watching, listening, and learning. The future they describe isn't shaped only by what they're told, but by what they see us accept, ignore, or fight for. If we want them to believe in a better tomorrow, we may need to start by demonstrating it today.

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PROUD TO BE LOCAL

Betty Collings



“Art should taunt.”

Marking twenty years of Mercury Bay Art Escape, we're highlighting one of the founders, Betty Collings, by talking to the other founder Dave Fowell. Now in her 94th year, Betty is a highly distinguished artist and innovator in sculpture, painting and ceramics.

Betty and her husband Ted Collings were living in Wellington in the 1960s when Ted was enticed to what became a long, distinguished scientific career in the USA. Betty took that opportunity to develop a stellar international career in the arts and curation. Around 30 years ago, when visiting the Coromandel, Betty and Ted fell in love with Hahei and a house, which led to them dividing their time between Columbus, Ohio and Hahei. She met Dave Fowell and had conversations about how artists are lost in the countryside.

“Their art comes out but you never really get to meet the artist,” says Dave. “We wondered how we can get people to meet the artists, see their working environment and maybe understand more about the art they produce.” Dave put the website and brochure together, then they realised they needed the artists. They knew some high profile ones but realised half a dozen isn't enough to make it worthwhile. “So, I got on the road and went hunting. I was absolutely amazed how many artists were hidden away in the bush. Coromandel artists tend to be

really into their environment and don't like living in town,” says Dave.

They were both surprised when around 25 artists showed up. Betty felt there was a need for recognition that there were serious thought-provoking artists in the Coromandel, not just hippies playing with art.

Dave said Betty's experience and integrity makes her so good to work with. Her show curation and museum gallery work in the US was very interesting to him.

“We can get a little bit cloistered in New Zealand; to talk to someone who has actually done it overseas is very important,” says Dave. “She has a very keen eye for what good art is, and does good art herself.”

Betty believes that every true artist has the need to create and evolve. She describes her art as constantly experimental and believes that art should involve thought and an intensity, not just something relating to a beautiful view. “When you don't know what your finished product is going to be, that is Art.”

When asked about the success of Art Escape over 20 years, Betty said she never thought about it lasting, but because it was so needed, its success makes sense.

www.bettycollingsart.com



Words by **Lynne Kingsbury and Ayana Piper-Healion**

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Cloud Wanderers

Kate & Henri Back in the Coromandel

The Mushroom Hustle



To 'wander like a cloud' (云游) is a term that comes from the ancient Chinese spiritual tradition of Daoism. It refers to holding steadfast to the self-cultivation path whilst travelling to seek teachers, learn skills and expose oneself to different cultures and conditions, helping to dissolve the 'acquired' self that's built up layers of biases and filters that shape who we are and narrow the way we view the world.

Cloud Wandering brought us to the Coromandel in 2020, as we were seeking a quiet spot in nature to go deep into meditative practices ... which turned into a 'covid project' of building a mountain cabin on Pumpkin Hill.

Cloud Wandering has also kept us travelling for the past 3 years to Indonesia, where we spent 7 months per year full time training in the Internal Arts of QiGong, NeiGong, Alchemy, TaiChi, Martial Arts, Chinese Medicine and more. Having sought many teachers of these arts around the globe (from temples in China to rooftops of Malaysia), we have been super lucky to undertake this full time study with world renowned expert in this field, Damo Mitchell & his Lotus NeiGong International School.

In this school we spend 6-8 hours of training daily under the guidance of incredible teachers. We have been deemed 'ready' to be Neigong teachers of the Lotus NeiGong system and will begin teaching classes in Whitianga as of mid April and host a retreat at Te Moata Retreat Centre in January 2027.

Whilst training full time with Lotus NeiGong, we both undertook a Chinese Medicine Acupuncture degree in Auckland. Often we would fly from Indonesia to Auckland for a week or two of intensive Chinese Medicine practice or exams before flying back again to continue our training. The hard work has borne fruit and we are now NZ Qualified Acupuncturists & Chinese Medicine practitioners!

We can help and support with a wide range of health conditions and are super happy to announce that we have opened a clinic in Whitianga at the lovely Earth Store and are also available for treatments from our home clinic on Pumpkin Hill.

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Kate is a registered nurse (with a specialisation in mental health).

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Mushrooms have been used in Chinese Medicine and culture for thousands of years. This reverence and respect has led us to China, investing a lot of time into exploring traditional use, growing techniques and extraction practices. The facilities and abilities in China are phenomenal and produce quality unlike anywhere else in the world.

So whilst we are always in support of growing and buying locally, for medicinal mushroom extracts, China produces the highest quality. Having been in the game for over a decade, extensively travelling to mushroom farms and manufacturing sites, learning under the top experts in the clinical use of mushrooms, and being healthcare practitioners ourselves, we are now starting a new range for New Zealand.

Whilst our Hong Kong operation offers cutting edge 'clinical grade mushrooms' globally, we are developing a premium supplement range for daily health support for Kiwis.

We have also imported a range of dried organic culinary mushrooms, which are not only delicious and fun to cook with, but there are numerous health benefits associated with eating mushrooms!

This is just the start of our new project: Silkroads.

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As the world seems to be getting more chaotic, we are setting up the Cloud Wandering HQ here in the Coromandel. We are so happy that we have made Coromandel our home base. We look forward to sharing what we have learned on our travels and being of service to the lovely community.

Ngā mihi,

Henri & Kate Lebedev

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Mindful

When they first played the trump card
Seemed the world was out to lunch
When they played a second time deafening the crunch

Rhetoric drips from honeyed lips
Sweet and easy mind the drips
Red tape tightened like a noose
We watch our neighbours cook their goose

At 6:00 pm if I watch them bray
I'll live in fear night and day
Covering behind my door
Replaying 1984

I could close my ears, eyes and mouth
Live in the bush shunning wealth
Climb tall mountains with a megaphone
Invite beggars to share a bone

But instead I choose to love this life
Careful not to embrace strife
Stilling my mind becomes my art
Then the truth flows from my heart

Listening to the earth rotate
Whānau friends a loving mate
Abundance at the farm gate
The little things that make life great

by Mama Khou

No time to Waste

No time to wait
Act on the impulse direct
Never ever hesitate
It may be an opportunity
you oughta not miss
But if the chance passes by
don't dwell upon the loss
Pick yourself up again cause
Each second comes at a cost.
It's time that is the enemy

It's time that cuts us down
So let loose all those possessions
that age us while we're bound
Bound with insecurities
Bound with lusts and wants
Bound with all unnecessities
Suffocated with things that are not.

Not worthy of our seconds, our
minutes, hours, or days
not worthy of our weeks and
months and our years that slip away.
It's our time that truly matters
each moment to be precise
So surround your time with the essence
of that, that is bright with light.

by Roimata Taimana



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When Thames Met Mercury Bay



Young Couples Choosing The Coromandel Over The City



It's a rival-schools-to-lovers story twice over: two Mercury Bay Area School boys and two Thames High girls end up living the quiet life together.

Geordie Hick and Noah Bowen both went to Whenuakite Primary School and Mercury Bay Area School. Their families are good friends, and they spent their childhood together down at the Purangi Estuary or the Cooks Beach store. Rata McMillan and Hannah Cook meanwhile were living out their school years together over the hills in Thames.

There's a beloved Kiwi tradition of poking fun at other towns similar but slightly different to yours.

"This is highly debated between us and the boys," Hannah mused, eyes rolling. "They think Thames isn't part of the Coromandel ... well, part of the 'good part' of the Coromandel."

Fate would have it, however, that Thames is where Geordie's orthodontist is, and it was on a trip to get his braces tightened that he met Rata through a mutual friend. One Fat Freddy's Drop concert and one house party later, Geordie and Rata had fallen for each other. Two weeks later Noah and Hannah followed suit. Rata joked that she and Hannah wondered "if they should even bother with these guys".

"They were all the way on the other side of the Coromandel, you know," she said.

Before they were living the beach life they are now, Hannah and Rata both spent a little time in the outside world studying. Rata studied music at the University of Waikato and Hannah studied commerce with majors in marketing and tourism at Victoria down in Wellington. Rata found herself missing home, and Hannah had always planned to come back. They both travelled back up north to live with Geordie and Noah, who were patiently waiting for them.

"I just found myself in Hamilton thinking, why am I here?" Rata said.

Now they spend the summers on the iconic Coromandel coast, and the winters chatting around one couple or the other's dining table.

"It's mainly the cruisy lifestyle that I like," Geordie said. "I don't think the hustle and bustle is really my thing. It worked out alright for us because most of our group in high school stayed here."

A place like the Coromandel can be an absolute paradise for tradies like Noah and Geordie. Both are happily working for trusted family trade companies Geoff Hick Builders

(Geordie's family business) and Elements Contemporary House Design (Noah's family business).

"It's always fairly busy here because the people with baches kinda have money for renovations even when they don't have money," Noah said. "We do high-end building instead of speed building."

In fact, they helped build the \$4.6 million home on the Cooks Beach waterfront that went up in flames in December 2023. Rata, Hannah, Geordie and Noah were there the night of the fire: being heroic, trying to put it out, Noah said.

"You were trying to put it out," said Hannah. "We were all yelling at you to leave it alone."

Rata works for the New Zealand School of Music teaching music at four different primary schools in the Coromandel. She's the first music teacher some of these schools have had.

"I teach one-on-one classes and small groups. So it's really just cute, excited kids, which is really nice."

She's still studying while she works, getting a diploma in teaching music.

Hannah is working for Richardson's in Cooks Beach. She reached out to them while she was thinking about studying and asked if they could recommend a good agency to study with.

"They just said, 'Do you want a job?'"

She started in an admin role while she was studying with Toi Ohomai. She got her branch manager's licence and is now studying for her agent licence.

"It's great when you don't have to go off to university. I've done all this training through polytechnic, and because it's quiet in the winter time I can study at work and just work my way through those qualifications."

The lifestyle is also why Hannah and Rata love the Coromandel.

"It's just so beautiful here," said Rata. "There's nowhere else like it. Everywhere is just so gorgeous. "And I love the contrast between winter and summer. It's funny how the locals tend to hibernate a bit when it's tourist season. Then when it's cold again they're the friendliest people ever."

Words by **Sarah Morcom**

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