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## Race like Rylee

Racers Dean Wedlake, left, Matthew Simpson, Zoe Winter, Rhona McInnes, Georgia McTaggart, and Kaia Van Doorn competed one-armed for Rylee Sayer, left. Photos: SUPPLIED

By KELLEY TANTAU, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

Hauraki Plains College's swimming sports this year featured something a little special, with select students jumping into the pool with one arm

tied to their sides.

The unique race was held to honour their peer, Rylee Sayer, who lost her right arm due to cancer in November.

Rylee, 15, is a talented swimmer herself.

Despite being born with a rare genetic condition called Tuberous Sclerosis Complex, she holds S14 para records for swimming and recently travelled to France to swim as part of the New Zealand Virtus

Global Games team.

In October last year, she was diagnosed with an aggressive form of bone cancer - an osteosarcoma - in her proximal humerus, which forms the ball of the shoulder's 'ball and socket'.

By November, she had to have a forequarter amputation of her right arm, scapula and clavicle.

But the setback hasn't stopped her from pursuing her

CONTINUED ON P2

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The Valley Profile is delivered weekly to letterboxes in the Hauraki Plains, Paeroa, Waihi, Thames, Thames Coast, plus bulk distribution peninsula-wide. Our focus is 100% local community news.

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# One-armed swim for amputee Rylee Sayer

CONTINUED FROM P1

love of swimming.

“On December 20, she had her staples out and so she got back into the pool on January 5 to start swimming again,” her mum Amanda told *The Profile*.

“She wants to go to the New Zealand Championships in April; her chemo schedule is allowing it. She has no expectations but she’s very driven to keep going and not let the disability she now has stop her from doing amazing things.”

The Race like Rylee event during Hauraki Plains College’s swimming sports day on February 19 featured five students and one teacher, Mr Dean Wedlake. The competitors had to swim one length of the pool with only one arm in action.

The race was the brainchild of college staff member Amanda Fitzpatrick, who said she “just wanted the kids to realise how lucky they are to have two arms”.

“Rylee’s attitude is second to none. [She’s] a very inspirational young lady,” she said.

Rylee now attends the Northern Health School but is still on the HPC roll. She trains at the Matamata Swimming Club and is coached by Graeme Laing, the son of the late New Zealand Olympic swimming coach, Duncan Laing.

Mum Amanda said the Race



The students dive into the pool one-armed.

Photo: SUPPLIED

like Rylee event created a great conversation around the struggles people with impairments can face. “Rylee really wants to be a disability advocate, and what she took out of it was the fact that the [students] could appreciate the struggle she’s been having,” she said.

“Most of the kids who did it had a swimming background, and before the race, they were asking me: ‘how does Rylee dive and how does she do this

or do that’. It was done with the utmost respect for Rylee.”

Race winner Matthew Simpson even donated his \$50 winnings to Rylee’s ongoing fundraising efforts.

“So many people are frightened by disability because they haven’t experienced it in their lives,” Amanda said, “whereas when we were told Rylee was going to have her amputation, Rylee literally turned around to the surgeon and said: ‘That’s

okay, I don’t need two arms to still be the same person’.”

Race like Rylee results: 1st Matthew Simpson; 2nd Rhona McInnes; 3rd Zoe Winter; 4th Georgia McTaggart; 5th Kaia Van Doorn.

**DETAILS: To donate to Rylee’s ongoing fundraising efforts, visit: [givealittle.co.nz/cause/rainbows-and-pretzels](http://givealittle.co.nz/cause/rainbows-and-pretzels).**



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## Thames Tides

Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Mar 13	Mar 14	Mar 15	Mar 16	Mar 17	Mar 18	Mar 19
 Morning 3:58am 0.1 4:28pm 0.1 Afternoon 10:21am 3.8 10:44pm 3.8 Sunrise 7:14am 7:40pm Best At 3:22am 3:47pm Rise 10:14am Set 9:12pm	 Morning 4:47am 0.2 5:16pm 0.2 Afternoon 11:11am 3.8 11:32pm 3.7 Sunrise 7:15am 7:38pm Best At 4:14am 4:41pm Rise 11:28am Set 9:45pm	 Morning 5:36am 0.4 12:00pm 3.6 Afternoon 6:03pm 0.3 Sunrise 7:16am 7:37pm Best At 5:08am 5:35pm Rise 12:41pm Set 10:23pm	 Morning 12:20am 3.5 12:51pm 3.4 Afternoon 6:28am 0.6 6:52pm 0.5 Sunrise 7:17am 7:35pm Best At 6:03am 6:32pm Rise 1:51pm Set 11:09pm	 Morning 1:12am 3.4 1:42pm 3.3 Afternoon 7:23am 0.8 7:44pm 0.7 Sunrise 7:18am 7:34pm Best At 7:00am 7:28pm First Quarter Rise 2:56pm	 Morning 2:07am 3.2 2:36pm 3.1 Afternoon 8:23am 0.9 8:41pm 0.9 Sunrise 7:19am 7:32pm Best At 7:56am 8:24pm Set 12:01am Rise 3:51pm	 Morning 3:10am 3.0 3:35pm 2.9 Afternoon 9:28am 1.1 9:46pm 1.0 Sunrise 7:20am 7:31pm Best At 8:51am 9:17pm Set 12:58am Rise 4:38pm

\*Not for navigational purposes. Graphic supplied by OceanFun Publishing Ltd. www.tidewiz.com www.tidespy.com www.ofu.co.nz

MOON AND FISH KEYS			
New Moon	First Quarter	Full Moon	Last Quarter
Good Fishing	Fair Fishing	Not So Good	

**TIME DIFFERENCES FOR OTHER PLACES**  
To determine tide times at the following places, add (+) or subtract (-) the given time difference from the Thames times listed in the calendar.

PLACE	Hr	High Mn	Low Mn
Coromandel	-0	04	-0 04
Whitianga	-0	01	-0 05
Tairua	+0	11	+0 21
Whangamata	-0	02	-0 05
Waihi Beach	-0	11	-0 12

# Dispelling taboo at Thames' Death Cafe

By KELLEY TANTAU, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

Talking about death doesn't have to be morose. In fact, at Thames' Death Cafe, healing conversations can be shared over cake and coffee - and laughter.

Jenny Dorrington-Colley has been the co-ordinator of the local Death Cafe for four years, starting it up after seeing the need for open, candid, and considerate discussions about kicking the bucket.

"I've always been fascinated by the human condition," she said. "Human beings and their resourcefulness amazes me and, personally, I got tired of the sanitisation of death."

"We don't do well as Westerners; other cultures do much, much better than us in terms of talking about death - and death is one of the only things that unifies us as humans."

At a Death Cafe, people, often strangers, gather to eat cake, drink tea, and discuss death.

The objective of the not-for-profit social franchise is to "increase awareness of death with a view of helping people make the most of their finite lives".

Death Cafes are always offered with no intention of leading people to any conclusion, product or course of action, and according to the international website, 178 Death Cafes have been listed for New Zealand.

"There's a lot of curiosity about it," Jenny said. "Death Cafe is in 66 countries and these days people's concerns are about modes of



Jenny Dorrington-Colley has been the co-ordinator of the local Death Cafe for four years, starting it up after seeing the need for open and considerate conversations about dying. Photo: KELLEY TANTAU

burial and there are conversations about assisted dying... Overall, my experience is that people aren't afraid of death, it's the process and what happens afterwards."

Jenny, who has been a counselor for more than 30 years, said she noticed how death had started to become a "taboo word and conversation piece".

"The whole concept of a Death

Cafe was to get beyond that - and it's certainly not a morbid meeting," she said. "We had a son come to pick his mum up from the Death Cafe and he couldn't believe he'd come to the right place because everyone was in hysterics."

The local Death Cafe is currently held inside the Thames Library, mid-morning, but ideally, Jenny would love for the group to be able

to meet in a cafe in town in the early evenings, to be able to cater to a wider variety of people.

Nonetheless, the group averages around 12 people per meeting and more are always welcome.


"It's never going to be for everybody," Jenny said.

"Some people come once, some people come every time, but there is no agenda. There's nothing

asked of them - except to come and have some coffee and cake."

**DETAILS: The Thames Death Cafe's next meeting is this Thursday, March 14 10.30am-noon in the Thames Library's Carnegie Room. For more info on the social franchise, visit [deathcafe.com](http://deathcafe.com).**








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# Education

## New academy shapes young engineers

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

Equipping students with the right skills, education and experience in the trades world is exactly what Hauraki Plains College has set out to do with the introduction of a brand new course.

The Trade Experience Academy kicked off at the secondary school this year, and consisted of building and construction, engineering, design and visual communication, and work experience.

Students who applied for the course needed to go through an interview process. Not only were students assessed on how they interviewed, their pastoral reports were also reviewed, which showed their behaviour from over the years at the high school.

Students were then shortlisted, with only 18 successful applicants making it into the class, and just like applying for employment, students were asked to sign a contract as part of the process.

If students “muck around”, they will get a letter sent home and could potentially lose their place in the class.

Head of technology Kyle Backhouse told *The Profile* the idea was to expose students to a range of different trades and help prepare them for that space.

Students would have a “good grounding and good idea of what it’s about” once they left school and joined the workforce, he said.

Students would be trained on how to safely use all the gear they



Students, left, Luke Cryer and Sean Underwood in the workshop.

Photo: SUPPLIED

would potentially use in the industry “so when they are on site, they can be trusted”, Mr Backhouse said.

Year 12 student Sean Underwood was one of the successful applicants who made it into the course.

“I chose it because I would like to get an apprenticeship or some-

thing after school.”

Sean said he had been doing work experience at Thames Structural Welders, and it was his favourite part of the course so far.

“[I] quite enjoy it.”

Most of the time, people at Sean’s workplace would help him out with things and then “leave me to it”, he said. “If I need anything, I

start talking.”

Sean said he had been working on a truck for the past couple of Fridays.

“[Working on the] starter motor, alternator, engine rebuild, basically the whole truck,” he said.

When asked about what skills and experience he’d like to gain during the course, Sean said he

was interested in building his knowledge in engineering.

Sean said he hadn’t found many challenges during the course so far, except for the design drawing because it was new to him.

Fellow classmate Luke Cryer said he chose the course to get more experience in the engineering world.

“I want to learn how to do more tech drawing so I can design my own stuff as well, so I can design something and make it for a company,” he said.

The 15-year-old said he had been doing work experience for his Dad’s business at Bedford Parts, and would carry on with work experience at Silver Fern Farms once he turned 16, working in maintenance and diagnostics engineering.

“It’s kind of what I want to do. “My Dad did a maintenance and diagnostics apprenticeship and he’s taught me a bit about it.”

For students interested in doing the course, Sean and Luke said just give it a go.

“Don’t be hesitant to do it,” Sean said.

“Just sign up for it and then do your interview and if you get into it - try your best and don’t give up.”

Meanwhile, the school was working on another new course called Unleashed Product Design - Makerspace, where students will explore principles of the design industry.

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“I love this class and I am looking forward to making the ring and giving it to my mum.” *Calin*

“It’s cool and a lot of fun, I’m looking forward to seeing the final fit.” *Seth*

“I have enjoyed the opportunities to learn new skills and have hands-on experience in automotive.” *Abigail*



# Cars, community and camaraderie

**OBITUARY**

**Tony Richards**  
1944 - 2023

By ALICE PARMINTER, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

The drinks and the memories were flowing in equal measure when friends and family came together to celebrate the life of Francis Tony "FT" Richards.

It seemed as if all of Thames Valley had a tale to tell about Tony, no matter how they knew him; from the colleagues admiring his business savvy, the staff appreciating his warm-heartedness, and the community leaders praising his generosity; to the sports buddies he travelled the world with, the close mates he partied hard with, and the family members he loved with all his heart.

By all accounts Tony Richards was a humble and genuine man, and as the anecdotes flowed, it was clear that Thames was poorer for having lost him.

"He was a bit of a hard case. Loved celebrating, not too many people celebrated like he did," son Wayne Richards said.

"[But] I think he should be remembered as a very community-minded businessman. I don't know if people realise how generous he was."

Tony was a stalwart contributor to the community over his lifetime, raffling vehicles and raising funds to support causes such as the Paeroa community



Tony Richards, centre, with his five children.

Photo: SUPPLIED

pool, the Life Education Trust, and the Hauraki Plains hockey pavilion.

"Anything that the community came to him with, he was always willing to find a way to support it, whether it was money, time, vehicles, or all of these. He'd give anyone an opportunity," Wayne said.

His generosity of spirit also extended to those close to him.

"Dad treated his staff as family and always held a huge amount of respect for them,"

Wayne said.

"And he was very proud of having his family carry on the business."

Most of Tony's working life was spent with Toyota. He took on the Valley Toyota franchise with the late John Muir and Bruce Muir as his business partners, followed shortly thereafter by Tony Richards Toyota in Paeroa.

Along with the business came a keen interest in motorsports, a complement to his lifelong

passion for rugby.

"He loved his sports, he loved supporting and he loved participating. He was world-renowned at the end of the day, he'd been all around the world doing rugby," Wayne said.

Tony passed away peacefully on December 17, surrounded by his family. Wayne said the family was grateful for the community's continued support and messages of love.

Tony's legacy will live on through his children Stephen

and Julie; Donna, Sue and Matt; Wayne and Rosie; Craig and Karen; Mark and Lisa, and step-children Mitch, Katie and Stephanie; and his 13 grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and six step-grandchildren.

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# TCDC floats 13% rates increase

By KELLEY TANTAU, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

To avoid a “significant spike in rates” of 20 per cent for Thames-Coromandel ratepayers, the district council has announced its preferred option of “spreading the increase” as it sets to lock in its 2024-2034 Long Term Plan.

Council is required to at all times have a Long Term Plan (LTP), and at its full meeting on March 5, it approved this year’s consultation document, now open for public feedback until April 8.

In the report, staff said the district was facing “challenges” which had resulted in “a significant jump in forecasted expenses compared to last year’s budget”.

“The need to catch up on deferred spending, surging inflation and supply costs, along with necessary road repairs are the main culprits,” it said.

Crunching the numbers revealed a significant spike in rates for the first year of 20 per cent.

However, to help reduce the immediate impact on ratepayers and give them more time to adjust, council proposed as its preferred option to spread the increase over the first two years. This would see an average rates increase of 12.9 per cent in 2024/25, an average 7.2 per cent increase in 2025/26, and an average 8.1 per cent increase in 2026/7.

When talking to ratepayers during the consultation process, councillor Robyn Sinclair told fellow elected members of the impor-

tance of “shifting the narrative”.

“The narrative that I used last LTP that I found really useful was to remind people that rates are a tax,” she said. “It’s unfortunate we have to pay them, but it also means we get to do all this very cool stuff within our district.

Public feedback is also sought on council’s proposal to invest more in planning for the district. This would provide additional budget for development of a district-wide spatial planning project for areas outside of Thames, costing \$6.8 million of operational expenditure over the ten years of the LTP.

Additionally, council is seeking the community’s opinion on options for the future of its central offices, in Mackay St, Thames.

According to its report, the buildings have “significant health, safety and earthquake issues that must be addressed within the next two years”.

Council has indicated a preference for the “most cost effective and efficient option”, which is to refurbish and upgrade the existing main building, totalling around \$8.9m in capital expenditure, and with a \$4m impact on debt.

With the consultation document now out for public feedback, hearings for those who wish to speak verbally on their submissions to the LTP are pencilled in to take place on April 30, as well as May 1 and 2. Council will deliberate on May 21 and 22, with the 2024-2034 LTP adopted at a full meeting on June 27.



Donna Hone holds some of her knitwear, which is part of the exhibition.

Photo: TALLIS AUSTEN

# Hordes of gourds at Paeroa Arts Centre

By TALLIS AUSTEN, Paeroa College Gateway student

Donna Hone says her personal art philosophy is to “try new things”.

“I love to make new things, learn new things, I don’t want to make ten of the same coffee mugs or anything, no two of my pieces are the same,” she said.

Born and bred in Northland, Donna’s always been into creating, and loves to make art that “serves a purpose”.

From knitting and pottery to turning dried gourds into bowls and lampshades, she likes her

pieces to be practical as well as beautiful. Donna gets lots of her inspiration from her garden, which is how the gourds, which are called hue in Māori, came into her work.

“When I first came to Paeroa I wanted to grow some gourds, just to have a go at carving one, but I grew, like, hundreds,” she said.

“And so I ended up finding out a lot more about them.

“They’ve evolved now into mostly being decoration but they used to be used as water carriers and containers for

food and storage. The history of them, I find it fascinating.”

An exhibition of Donna’s works is on display at the Paeroa Arts centre between 10am and 3pm until the end of the month.

Donna will be at the arts centre herself at times throughout March as a volunteer.

“People will just come in for a chat, the first thing I sold was a little bird to a tourist,” she said.

“She had no idea that it was my exhibition when she bought it which was cool, and it’s inspiring to sell something of my own.”

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# Large events divert waste from landfill

By KELLEY TANTAU, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

In partnership with the Hauraki Repair and Reuse Centre, the district council has been encouraging event organisers to minimise their waste, with positive results.

Hauraki District Council recommends that an 'Event Waste Management and Minimisation Plan' be submitted for each public event that takes place.

This is because event organisers are responsible for the clean up of all rubbish resulting from their festivities.

And by enlisting the help of the Hauraki Repair and Reuse Centre, led by former councillor Duncan Smeaton, the worry of waste will be taken off organisers' hands.

"The Hauraki Repair and Reuse Centre deliver the bins to the event location, staff the bins on the day, provide education to the public to make sure items go in the right bin, remove the bins, weigh the contents, and clean and return the bins to storage," council said.

"Event organisers get the full gold standard service with one phone call to council. It's one less thing for them to worry about and eventgoers love it too."

The first large event to utilise the centre's skillset was the Paeroa Lions' Fireworks Night, in which organisers reduced



At the recent Highland Games in Paeroa, with an estimated 4500 people in attendance, the Hauraki Repair and Reuse Centre calculated 57 per cent of the event waste was diverted from landfill.

Photo: SUPPLIED

their landfill content by more than 25 per cent.

The waste minimisation efforts by the organisers of the He Rā Maumahara event at Ray's Rest also were "exceptional", council said, as they organised a compostable pick up, and separated soft plastic

and all other recyclables and food waste so that what went to landfill was "absolutely minimal".

"Other events like Trail Trilogy and the Nugget have been reducing landfill for a number of years, so it is a really positive change and it is fantastic to see

organisers and the public so supportive of waste reduction."

At the recent Highland Games in Paeroa, with an estimated 4,500 people in attendance, the Hauraki Repair and Reuse Centre calculated that 57 per cent of the event waste was diverted from landfill.

"At council, we are committed to reducing waste to landfill by providing recycling opportunities to our communities to achieve this goal with ease," a spokesperson told The Profile.

"Good habits start at home, and we're already seeing an increase in the amount of recycling we're collecting. The next step is to keep up the good habits at events – so the better the waste management is at events, the more opportunity there is to reduce what goes to landfill."

People are reminded to make behavioural changes by taking reusable items with them to events. This includes: a keep cup, a water bottle, and reusable cutlery.

Event organisers can also call council on 0800 734 834 (in the district) or 07 862 8609 and ask for the Waste Management department to organise waste minimisation at their events. Visit: [www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz/community/event-planning/event-toolkit](http://www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz/community/event-planning/event-toolkit).



# Free riding

Bicycle riders will be travelling lighter than usual on March 16, when the annual World Naked Bike Ride takes to the streets.

The event, organised by Hauraki Naturally, World Naked Bike Ride NZ and Waihi Beach Hotel, sports the tagline "ride as bare as you dare". The light-hearted protest ride takes place in around 80 cities in the world, with other New Zealand events being held in Takaka and Dunedin.

The first international World Naked Bike Ride took place in Spain, in June 2004. It began as a protest against the dependency of oil power, but has since grown to encompass a variety of issues.

The Waihi Beach event aims to promote cycling as an alternative to fossil fuel-based transport, and draw attention to the safety of cyclists on the roads. The ride also hopes to improve riders' fitness, mental and physical health, and promote body positivity.

The World Naked Bike Ride event is free to enter, and there is no need to register. Participants will cycle 11km in a loop trail from the Waihi Beach Motel, through the village and towards Bowen-town. The course is flat and will take an estimated 55 minutes to complete.

Clothing is optional for the event, and the organisers encourage participants to wear as little as they are comfortable with. The movement website suggests a number of alternatives for those who are uncomfortable going completely au-naturelle, such as body paint.

**DETAILS: March 16, 10.30am from the Waihi Beach Motel. See [www.wnbr.nz](http://www.wnbr.nz) for more info.**

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Photo courtesy of Mike Hill



# Rural Life

## New 'Checking-in' project events announced

Several new 'Checking-in' events to support North Island rural communities impacted by last year's adverse weather events have been announced for 2024.

'Checking-in' is a collaboration project run by the Agri-Women's Development Trust, Rural Women New Zealand and Farmstrong, supported by the Rural Support Trust. The project is funded by the Ministry for Primary Industries as part of the NIWE (North Island Weather Event) response and aims to help rural communities affected by adverse weather through in-person events and programmes.

One year after Cyclone Gabrielle caused widespread damage to the northern and East Coast regions of New Zealand, the rebuild, cleanup and need for support across communities remains ongoing.

Checking-in spokesperson Gerard Vaughan of Farmstrong said they hoped the events – ranging from light-hearted comedy, wellbeing and resilience programmes to the celebration of women who have made an impact in weather-affected communities – would strike a chord with North Island communities tasked with building back.

"Often when we are under the pump we forget to do the things that help us to get through," he said.

"These events create an opportunity for farmers and growers and their families to have a night off, have a laugh and connect with others. Having breaks away from the day-to-day challenges is a great way to refresh so you are in a good headspace to keep going".

Farmstrong has announced The Bitches' Box series running from Northland to Wairarapa during April and May. The Bitches' Box fourth live show sees actors Emma Newborn and Amelia Dunbar revisiting some of their most loved dog characters, with the latest offering set to deliver the hilarious, fast-paced, multi-character comedy they've become "world famous in rural New Zealand" for.

Agri-Women's Development Trust (AWDT) will hold more wellbeing and resilience programmes in late February and March including Know your Mindset. Lead the recovery, a subsidised two-part online programme supporting food and fibre leaders to manage the multiple pressures of leadership in times of challenge. AWDT is also offering YOU Matter programmes for women across the East Coast and Northland, giving them the opportunity to pause, re-energise and build the courage, mindset, skills and connections for recovery in a safe and supportive space.

Rural Women New Zealand are celebrating the female heroes of the North Island weather-affected communities with their 'Rest, Refresh and Revitalise' events, to be held during March and April. With a focus on taking care of those who have looked after others, these events will bring together nominated women who have supported their communities over the past year for some much-deserved time out. Nominations for women who have gone above and beyond in supporting their communities are now open.

DETAILS: [www.rural-support.org.nz](http://www.rural-support.org.nz).



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# Rural Life

## Hauraki dairy award winners celebrated

The Auckland and Hauraki region's Dairy Industry Awards were held on March 7 at the Thames Civic Centre, and there were winners from across the district.

The big winner on the night was Teegan Gray from Thames, who was named the 2024 Dairy Manager of the Year. She also took out merit awards in the dairy manager category for livestock management, dairy management, pasture and feed management, people and leadership, and cow manager personal planning and financial management.

Teegan is a farm manager on Neil and Glenda Gray's 160ha Thames farm, milking 478 cows.

The fifth generation of the Gray family to manage the farm, she cites a united vision for the farm and good infrastructure as two strengths of the business.

The 33-year-old holds a Bachelor of Agriscience from Massey University, and believes the dairy industry could do better with accepting females into high management roles.

"You often have to work twice as hard to prove you are capable of the same opportunities on-farm," she said.

"I hope I can be a positive influence for other women coming through the industry, that dairy farming is a sustainable career for females."

Runner-up went to Steven Pratt in Patetonga. The 32-year-old said he was very proud to be



Teegan Gray was awarded the 2024 Dairy Manager of the Year trophy.

Photo: SUPPLIED

providing food on a global basis.

"I'm proud to be working on the farm that has been in our family for 110 years and aim to keep it as a sustainable and viable business," he said.

Steven holds a Bachelor of Agriculture from Lincoln University and is farm manager on David and Paula Pratt's 170ha, 430-cow Patetonga property.

Third place went to Waerenga's

Owen Clifford, who also received the environmental sustainability merit award. Owen is the farm manager for Ross and Tracey Laing on their 200ha, 500-cow Waerenga property.

There was no winner for the 2024 share milker of the year, as the entrant scores did not meet the required benchmark. However, a runner-up was awarded, with Ngatea couple Brad and

Courtney Edwards receiving the honour, along with merit awards for leadership and business performance.

Brad and Courtney are 50/50 sharemilkers for Maureen Martinovich on her 90ha, 240-cow property at Ngatea.

"We entered the awards as we thought it was a good opportunity to showcase our business and to know the ins and outs of our busi-

ness and how we run it compared to others," they said.

The 23-year-olds are both active in the community with hockey and Hauraki Young Farmers, where Courtney is Vice Chair.

Their two young sons motivate them to achieve their goals.

"We've worked our butts off to get where we are today and are proud we achieved a 50/50 sharemilking role at a young age."

Share milker Casey Meiklejohn from Mangatawhiri received merit awards for people and culture; animal wellbeing, recording and productivity; and environmental sustainability.

Casey is contract milking for Jamie Lyons on his 88ha, 222-cow Mangatawhiri farm.

Caitlin Snodgrass from Awaiti was the runner-up in the 2024 dairy trainee of the year category. She is a farm assistant on Stu and Karen Davey's 200ha, 566-cow Morrinsville property.

The first-time entrant was encouraged to experience the Awards by peers in the Hauraki Young Farmers club and her employers, Brendan and Tessa-Hopson, who were 2020 Share Farmer category winners.

"I realised how great the opportunity was to network, review what skills I've gained and discover where next to focus my attention," Caitlin said.

"I was so nervous to enter the Awards being fresh to farming but I'm thrilled I just gave it a go."

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Lifeguard Vicki Skill has been named a 'Community Unsung Hero'. Photo: SUPPLIED

# Whiritoa's 'unsung hero'

By KELLEY TANTAU, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

Lifeguard Vicki Skill has been named a 'Community Unsung Hero' at this year's Sport Waikato Sport and Active Recreation Awards.

Vicki was credited for playing an important role in reviving the Whiritoa Lifeguard Service committee from collapse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

She rallied new recruits and reshaped the committee's culture, ensuring its success.

According to her winner's blurb, Vicki's selfless dedication, evident in her voluntary financial management and lifeguard training, had been "instrumental" in the resurgence of the lifeguard service.

"Under her guidance, club membership and participation in lifeguard activities have surged, while projects like the Club Rebuild Committee signify

Vicki's role in fostering organisational growth and development. Feedback from members underscores her professionalism and positive influence, affirming Vicki's invaluable contribution to the community's safety and enjoyment of Whiritoa Beach."

More than 110 nominations from around the region were received for the 2023 Waikato Sport and Active Recreation Awards, with finalists and their supporters attending the awards evening on February 15.

Sport Waikato chief executive Matthew Cooper said it was "fantastic" to be able to put the spotlight on the finalists. "They'll tell you they don't do what they do to receive an award, but the acknowledgement and recognition goes such a long way towards feeling valued."



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# Unsafe gun causes fatal shooting accident



As part of a Valley Profile series, **MEGHAN HAWKES** explores our local history by seeking out stories of life and death in the Thames Valley

John Dalton was after a spot of relaxation on a Sunday afternoon in April 1867 at Pūkoro - Miranda.

He worked at Mr Dix's flax mill at the Miranda Redoubt, one of a party of six men who were engaged in the hard labour of preparing flax.

The 22-year-old lived with other mill employees and one of them, James McNeil, idly watched as John measured out some shot with his hand and loaded it into his double-barrelled gun.

As John left the house about 4pm he said he was going to look for pigeons to shoot.

He appeared to have been successful as about quarter of an hour later James heard a shot fired.

The report of the gun was also heard by the other men, but no more notice taken of it until night set in, when John hadn't returned.

The men went out and fired a pistol, thinking, perhaps, John might have lost his way, but



A typical NZ flax mill, late 1800s.

Photo: SUPPLIED

they received no answer.

The next morning his workmates again went out to look for him and were horrified to find him about 6.30 around half a mile from the Redoubt along the beach, lying face down, dead.

His gun had burst and lay in several pieces around him. His mates took his body to the Redoubt, and a messenger was despatched to Constable Morris, who then alerted the coroner.

At the inquest, held at the Redoubt, James Grix, who had also observed John preparing the gun, said that John was sober when he loaded the gun and did not put two charges in one barrel.

The gun itself was found to be quite unsafe. Henry Porter, who had carried firearms for 21 years, said the gun was worn out, dirty, and manufactured of very inferior metal.

Dr William Montague Hall Welby said that head injuries were the cause of John's death which was almost instantaneous.

The jury found that John was killed on the Pūkoro flat, near the Miranda Redoubt, "by the bursting of a gun accidentally, by misfortune and not otherwise."

Around three weeks later, Mr Dix broke up his flax mill and returned with it to Auckland on the cutter Peter Cracroft, taking with him his household and

workmen, spooked by a disturbing atmosphere that had fallen over the district.

Some days earlier a Māori had warned him of the hostile intention of a band of other Māori who were gathering strength in the district, and were threatening to attack the mill at Pūkoro.

Several strange Māori had previously visited the place, and left an unfriendly feeling on departing, and this, coupled with other threats, convinced the mill workmen to desert their posts.

Mr Dix, finding his men reduced to two, abandoned the spot.

John Dalton was buried at Drury.

## In Brief

### GAMING TRUST GRANTS

New Zealand Community Trust has provided \$77,573 in grants across the Waikato during its latest funding round. The Paeroa L&P BMX Club received \$7176 for lime; Paeroa Sports Club received \$32,525 for field lighting and equipment; and the Combined Clubs of Coromandel received \$8760 for contractor costs. The gaming venues that contributed to these grants were: Paeroa Hotel; Royal Oak Hotel, Thames; Star & Garter, Coromandel; Pitch Sports Bar, Taupo; and The Lucky Lizard, Taupo.

### GET CREATIVE, HAURAKI

Hauraki District Council's Creative Communities Scheme funding for local arts is now open. There are two funding rounds a year, and while there is no maximum amount people can apply for, grants usually range between \$500-\$5,000. Funding applications close at 4pm Monday, March 18. For more information, visit the HDC website.

### REPRESENTATION REVIEW

Thames-Coromandel District Council is reviewing how its local communities are represented after unanimously voting to establish one or more Māori Wards for the 2025 Local Elections. A survey is now open until Sunday, March 31 and will help council understand how its communities feel about key aspects of the current representation structure. The review does not revisit the decision to establish Māori Wards. Email [review@tcdc.govt.nz](mailto:review@tcdc.govt.nz)



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# Swim sports

The Thames Valley Secondary School swimming sports competition was held at Thames Centennial Pool on March 6. Students from across the peninsula competed in relays and individual events while enjoying the last of the summer sunshine.

**ALICE PARMINTER** dived into the action.



Kingston Welsh from Hauraki Plains College takes on the 100 metre individual medley.

Photos: ALICE PARMINTER



Fletcher Wilkinson dives into the senior boys' 100 metre team relay.



Wyatt Doherty from Thames High School.



Paeroa College's Caitlyn Hill in the breaststroke.



In position for the intermediate boys' 50 metre breaststroke.



Lexis Rohrlach swims for Thames High.



Junior girls prepare for the 50 metre backstroke.

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# Building & Renovation

## A new life for historic Thames courthouse

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

A love of art and history encouraged a fresh adventure for Elizabeth Kyle and Ron Harvey, the new owners of an iconic heritage building in Thames.

Light pours into the building's main room, the gallery, from windows on the second storey.

The double-height ceiling makes room for assorted art pieces adorning vivid red walls and kauri floorboards.

Elizabeth had seen red walls before in a gallery in Sydney and she thought it looked fabulous, so she decided red was the colour they would paint her gallery.

Because the old courtroom space is two storeys high, it's like a square box, so, the red focuses the eye on the art and sculptures in the lower section.

Setting up a gallery to showcase Elizabeth's art was the couple's main reason for purchasing and re-purposing the old Thames Courthouse in September last year.

The pair, who were living in Tau-ranga, had been looking all over the North Island for a permanent venue for around seven years.

"It felt as though it called us - as though the building needed us as much as we needed it," Elizabeth said.

Due to the courthouse being a heritage building, the council's conditions were that it must be used for commercial purposes, not



The historic courthouse.

residential. A manager's flat was allowed, as long as it was upstairs, and that's where the couple plan to live.

The previous occupants of the building were the Supported Life Style Trust, but it was owned by the Bahá'í faith, they said.

"That's why I think the energy in here is so lovely. You wouldn't want a disgruntled prisoner's energy would you?"

Ron was a builder and had worked for 20 years as a construction site manager in Australia, which included work on refurbishing heritage buildings, so he is familiar with what's required.

Any internal cosmetic changes can be made as long as they can be reversed in the future, i.e painting, window furnishings and lighting.

Most of the work they've completed so far had been cosmetic, with a lot of painting. No structural work can be done without getting consents from council, which automatically triggers a requirement that involves Heritage New Zealand.



Ron Harvey and Elizabeth Kyle.

Photos: DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

A retail store is to be set up in the building's front room to sell some of Elizabeth's original artwork, cards, prints, and Medieval-themed items. Now Elizabeth is 72, she finds she is unable to spend long hours creating art works as she did in the past.

"I'm going to be more like a hostess here; talking about my artworks, and encouraging people on their own, unique, creative journeys."

Everything in the gallery sits in perfect position. A rocking horse in the middle of the room, jester sculptures in the corners, and

paintings in places where they all have a chance to shine. Plans were set to elevate a large sculpture of Pegasus above the gallery.

Another significant feature in the back corner of the room was a giant-sized book called *Merlin's Secrets*. When the cover is pulled open, it reveals a secret door to Merlin's den. It'll be an interactive experience, and a magical room full of wonder and excitement - when completed. Merlin's Den could be used as a storytelling space.

They plan to have special events of psychic, Oracle and angel readings in Merlin's Den, and upstairs

above the shop, plus a teaching room for Elizabeth to run her drawing classes.

Heritage Listing requirements mean the outside area has to remain pretty much as it is, but they have been working on a private garden at the rear of the building.

They can't change much of the outside of the building, but that's fine with them because they both love old buildings, and the building is superb just as it is in its beautiful heritage colours.

The building was built in 1870 and closed as a courthouse around about 1973.

Seeing early photos from inside the building was something they would have loved, however, due to a fire and flood in the 1930s, they haven't been able to find any photo records. They did find some photos of the exterior at the The Treasury Research Centre and Archive building, also on Queen St.

All the original council records are no longer in the council archives, so they weren't able to get any plans of the original building.

One way Elizabeth and Ron have heard old stories about the building was when people walked in off the street to tell them.

There was one visitor that called in unexpectedly and said that he "used to be the bailiff here". He worked next door at the old Police Station.

"We both love history so that's really fascinating to know."

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Our strong family values, treating people right combined with quality product and connections with the community have made a great first year for Totalspan Coromandel, Kyle said.

Coming from the Hauraki and Coromandel area, it was important for Kyle and Nicola's community-minded principles to carry over into the workplace as well.

"Living and working in our local area

gives us a good head start and we've been fortunate enough to retain the existing quality people, and we are working hard towards building a fantastic team for the future," the couple said.

Nicola and Kyle's team includes Charles Kempster, sales consultant, and Amanda Richards in sales support/project administration, as well as three builders and other contractors.

Between Charles and Kyle, there is more than 25 years' experience in the building industry.

"We're now consistently getting good feedback, which was one of our main aims after taking over," Kyle said.

For customers keen to chat with Charles about upcoming projects, head along to the Totalspan Coromandel at Kopu Rd, Thames or Ph 0800 Totalspan.

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## Get winter-ready with Smith and Sons

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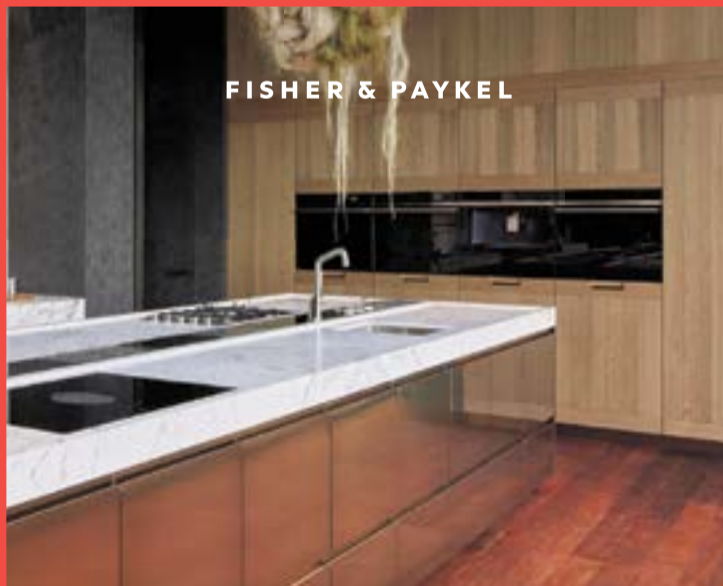


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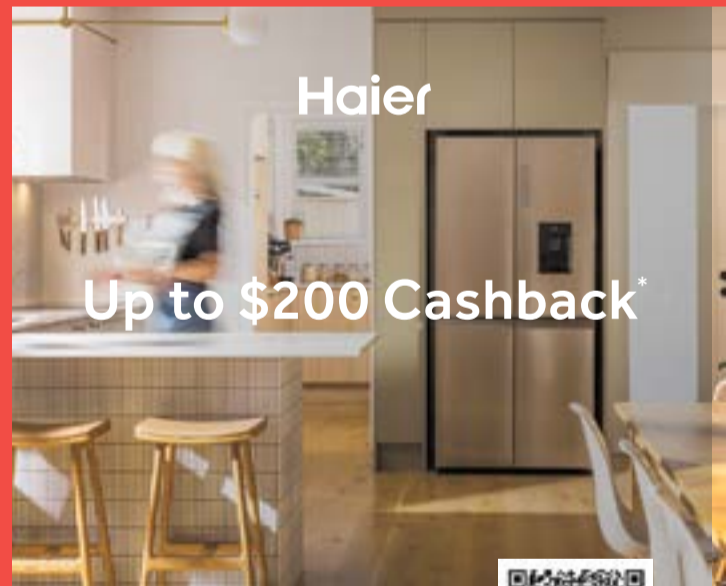


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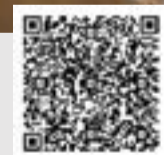
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Happy customer Elaine, left, with Stan Reihana of That Painter Ltd.

Photo: SUPPLIED

## Freshen up with That Painter

Work has been flat out this summer season for Stan Reihana of That Painter Ltd, who says the run of good weather has seen exterior painting jobs take priority.

"A big thank you to all the pleased customers in the Thames area, Ngatea and Paeroa for keeping the paint flowing," he said. "As autumn and winter draw near, please consider giving me a call now to organise your free interior or exterior free quote and to book in your

painting project." Contact Stan on 022 313 7911.

Here's what one happy customer had to say: "Just want you to know that we are delighted with the paint job you did on our house.

"We would happily recommend you to anyone who wanted any painting done. Your attention to detail and meticulous workmanship ensured the finished job looks great. Many thanks."

- Elaine and Sharon (Thames).

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# Cathedral Cove news pleases campaigners

By KELLEY TANTAU, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

The Mercury Bay Business Association is feeling "cautiously optimistic" following the announcement that access to Cathedral Cove could be open before summer returns.

The update was provided by Conservation Minister Tama Potaka, who said reinstating walking access to the popular tourist destination before the 2024/25 summer was a priority for the Department of Conservation.

"Ideally, we want safe walking access to the beach reinstated and our ambition is to have it ready for visitors next summer," Mr Potaka said.

"I expect to receive advice from officials by the end of June on the reinstatement options... There are some further conversations to be had with Ngāti Hei, the Coromandel community, and our stakeholders in the district about how this work is resourced and supported."

Mercury Bay Business Association spokesman Ray van Beynen said both his organisation and members of the Hahei Residents and Ratepayers Association were feeling "cautiously optimistic" following the announcement.

"[We] believe this will go a long way towards restoring the serious loss of trust and confidence in DOC's handling of this issue to date.

"Both the business association and the ratepayers association will now be

focused on how local communities can best support key stakeholders, including Ngāti Hei and DOC, in achieving this reopening. What we don't want is more stalling," he said.

"We are grateful the minister has heard his constituents and that there is a clear plan and timetable. We will be keeping an eye on that timetable as for us in the Coromandel, summer starts at Labour Weekend."

Thames-Coromandel Mayor Len Salt said his council welcomed the commitment by the Department of Conservation to have a safe track reopen.

"The announcement is a testament to the concerted effort put in by our community, including business operators, to make their voices heard in Wellington," he said.

"In the meantime, the track to Cathedral Cove is not safe for visitors. There are still rockfall and land movement challenges at the site. In conjunction with Ngāti Hei and local operators, the Department of Conservation has created alternative visitor experiences in and around Hāheī near Cathedral Cove that provide access to cultural heritage sites and offer views over the stunning coastline of this area."

**DETAILS: Further information can be found on the DOC website: www.doc.govt.nz.**



# Work on Thames shoreline protection begins

Work on design concepts for the protection of Thames is now underway, following project work indicating that \$1 billion in assets are at risk over the long-term from the effects of flooding and storm-surge associated with sea-level rise.

Thames-Coromandel District Council said protection was the preferred adaptation pathway for Thames confirmed by community consultation during the Shoreline Management project. The three-year project examined the risks to the entire Coromandel coastline from the effects of sea-level rise. Specific actions to manage those risks have now been assessed and ranked, with work to protect Thames among the top priorities. A governance group to progress the Thames protection work met for the first time this month, made up of representatives from council, Ngāti Maru and Waikato Regional Council.

"We know that Thames is especially vulnerable to storm surge and flooding associated with sea-level rise, putting around \$1 billion of assets in our township at risk," said Mayor Len Salt, who is chairing the Thames Protection and Resilience Governance Group.

"Thames is the economic nerve-centre of our district, home to the bulk of the Coromandel's service provision, maritime industry, healthcare and business infrastructure. It's our duty to the entire

region to ensure Thames is resilient, and able to grow, for generations to come."

Royal HaskoningDHV consulting engineers will now proceed with staged design options to protect the township against coastal inundation for a 1 per cent AEP storm over the next 100 years. An earlier feasibility study showed the main challenge associated with protecting Thames was the required cost and scale of any defensive structures, as many locations are low-lying.

Design work will include full hydrodynamic modelling, and joint probability analysis of coincident coastal and fluvial flooding events. The governance group notes that it will be important that any protection structure connects with other stormwater and river management work. Funding for the design work, and ensuing community consultation on design options, is allocated through 2023-2024 Long Term Plan, with funding for the construction of protection yet to be determined.

"We're going to come up against some big costs, but those need to be assessed against the value of what's at risk," Mayor Salt said. "We're facing up to these challenges head-on, and doing the forward-thinking, groundbreaking work that's required, rather than just hoping the issues somehow go away. It's a multi-generational vision and long-term action plan."

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- Wednesday, 20 March, 3pm-6pm, Lakes Resort Golf and Country Club, 100 Augusta Drive, Pauanui

## Scott Simpson MP for Coromandel

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## Hauraki Plains ADAPTATION PLAN

Climate Change in the Hauraki Plains

**JOIN US** Come along to our open days!

Talk with us at one of these local events to tell us about your experiences and find out how we can work together on planning for a safe, resilient future for the Hauraki Plains.

### Kerepēhi Bowling Club Saturday 16 March 3pm-5pm

- Bring the whānau - all welcome!
- Try your hand at Bowls while joining in the kōrero for the Hauraki Plains.
- Free games and sausage sizzle!
- CFM mobile radio studio will be broadcasting live from Kerēpehi.



### Turua Market Sunday 17 March 9am-12.30pm - Turua Hall

**SCAN ME** **Can't make it to the open days?**  
 Sign up online to stay updated on the progress on planning, good quality technical information, tell us about your experiences and dates for more Open Days.  
<https://letstalk.hauraki-dc.govt.nz/> or contact us by email - [info@hauraki-dc.govt.nz](mailto:info@hauraki-dc.govt.nz) or phone 0800 734 834

The Hauraki Plains Adaptation Plan is partially funded by central government's Better Off Package funding to invest in the wellbeing of our communities.



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## SUDOKU

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Fill the grid so every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9

		7		9	5			
	8	6		2	7	9		
	5	4		3		7	8	
4	3		7		6		1	
	9	8				5	7	
	2		9		4		3	8
	6	3		7		8	4	
		9	1	4		3	2	
			5	6		1		

EASY

6				3	5		1	8
7			8			4		6
						2		
			7			1	8	2
2	7	3			4			
		6						
3		7			1			5
1	4		6	2				7

MEDIUM

	1				9			8
		8					5	4
5	7		6					9
		5		7	8			
	3						8	
			6	2		4		
8				9		5		3
3	6					8		
9			2				4	

HARD

141

HARD

2	1	3	5	4	9	6	7	8
6	9	8	7	3	2	1	5	4
5	4	7	8	6	1	3	2	9
4	2	5	3	7	8	9	6	1
7	3	6	9	1	4	2	8	5
1	8	9	6	2	5	4	3	7
8	7	2	4	9	6	5	1	3
3	6	4	1	5	7	8	9	2
9	5	1	2	8	3	7	4	6

MEDIUM

6	9	4	2	3	5	7	1	8
7	3	2	8	1	9	4	5	6
5	1	8	4	7	6	2	9	3
4	5	9	7	6	3	1	8	2
8	6	1	5	9	2	3	7	4
2	7	3	1	8	4	5	6	9
9	2	6	3	5	7	8	4	1
3	8	7	9	4	1	6	2	5
1	4	5	6	2	8	9	3	7

EASY

2	1	7	8	9	5	4	6	3
3	8	6	4	2	7	9	5	1
9	5	4	6	3	1	7	8	2
4	3	5	7	8	6	2	1	9
6	9	8	3	1	2	5	7	4
7	2	1	9	5	4	6	3	8
1	6	3	2	7	9	8	4	5
5	7	9	1	4	8	3	2	6
8	4	2	5	6	3	1	9	7

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## JUMBO CROSSWORD

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### ACROSS

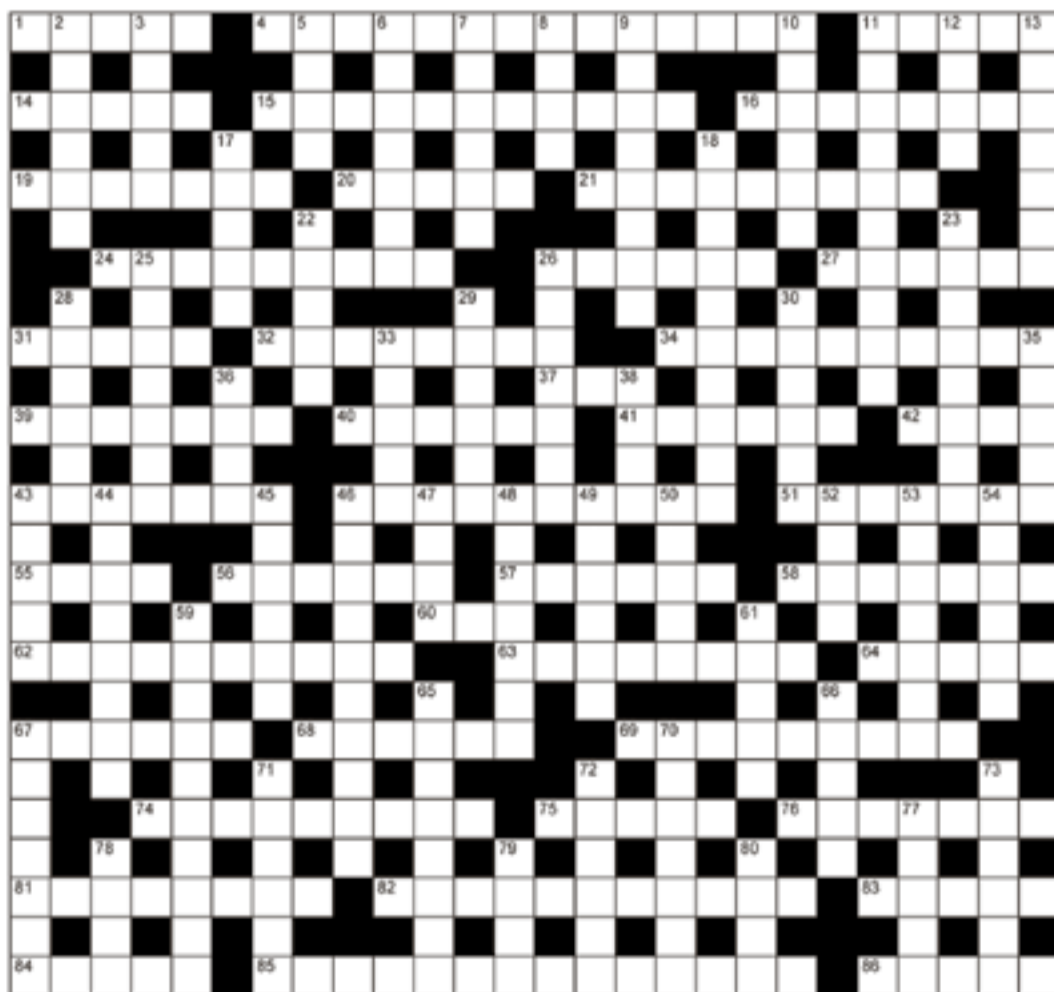
- 1 Revolution (5)
- 4 Photographer's instruction (5,3,6)
- 11 Desert animal (5)
- 14 Deadly (5)
- 15 Formally admitted to office (11)
- 16 Three-hulled boat (8)
- 19 Shine wetly (7)
- 20 Swim (5)
- 21 Appalling (9)
- 24 Disappear (anag)(9)
- 26 Earlier (6)
- 27 Talented (6)
- 31 Emerge from egg (5)
- 32 What Americans call the game of draughts (8)
- 34 Criminally deceptive (10)
- 37 Doleful (3)
- 39 Shots (7)
- 40 Gambling house (6)
- 41 Official at a cricket match (6)
- 42 Minus (4)
- 43 Energy sugar (7)
- 46 Gets rid of (10)
- 51 Tycoon (7)
- 55 Curved support (4)
- 56 Write untidily (6)
- 57 Tooth deposit (6)
- 58 Fate (7)
- 60 Age (3)
- 62 Torn down (10)
- 63 Unlawful occupant (8)
- 64 Xmas foliage (5)

- 67 Light cake (6)
- 68 Do a favour for (6)
- 69 Surreal, imaginary (9)
- 74 New York island (9)
- 75 Home (5)
- 76 Warn (7)
- 81 First public performance (8)
- 82 Recurrent urge to steal (11)
- 83 Avid, enthusiastic (5)
- 84 Sudden forward motion (5)
- 85 Basic daily work to ensure a living (5,3,6)
- 86 Wharf (5)

### DOWN

- 2 Every 12 months (6)
- 3 Power cables (5)
- 5 Female relation (4)
- 6 Bravery (7)
- 7 Showed how (6)
- 8 Student's test (4)
- 9 Name (8)
- 10 Garden insect (6)
- 11 Official announcement, especially to the press (10)
- 12 Boggy area (4)
- 13 Whistle rope (7)
- 17 Very strange (5)
- 18 Disparagement of something desired but unobtainable (4,6)
- 22 Vision (5)
- 23 And so on (8)
- 25 Largest ocean (7)
- 26 Blown instrument (7)

- 28 Handbook (6)
- 29 Spiritualist (6)
- 30 Minimum attendance for a legal meeting (6)
- 33 Move on all fours (5)
- 35 Sample by mouth (5)
- 36 Weapons (4)
- 38 Song for two (4)
- 43 Protect (5)
- 44 Rare (8)
- 45 Surfeit (6)
- 46 Make even worse (10)
- 47 Not occupied (4)
- 48 Deadlock (7)
- 49 Beaded counting frame (6)
- 50 Burst open (5)
- 52 Skater's leap (4)
- 53 Interconnected system (7)
- 54 Knot (6)
- 59 Take and use another's words as one's own (10)
- 61 Loosen up (5)
- 65 Put out of action (8)
- 66 See-through (5)
- 67 Surgical knife (7)
- 70 Glowing brightly (7)
- 71 Winged child (6)
- 72 Soak up (6)
- 73 Law-abiding (6)
- 77 Provoke (5)
- 78 Blood vessel (4)
- 79 Unlock (4)
- 80 Dossier (4)



### PREVIOUS SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1 Swinging voter, 8 Abrupt, 14 Close, 15 Platinum, 16 Tissues, 17 Circa, 18 Tic, 19 Parsnip, 21 Offspring, 22 Lustre, 25 Henceforth, 27 Drenched, 28 Cosmos, 31 Purser, 33 Bubbles, 34 Remark, 35 Adds, 37 Ore, 39 Acme, 40 Astound, 41 Intuition, 42 Emerald, 43 Princess, 48 Postcard, 52 Cardiac, 56 Status quo, 57 Erratic, 58 Arid, 59 Tip, 60 Emir, 61 Renege, 62 Rosette, 63 Eleven, 65 Musket, 66 Inspects, 68 Racecourse, 71 Aviary, 72 Armistice, 74 Twiggled, 76 Bus, 79 Tinge, 80 Stamina, 81 Pastille, 83 Elate, 84 Useful, 85 Slap in the face.

DOWN: 2 Welfare, 3 Notes, 4 Inn, 5 Game, 6 Out of the blue, 7 Eases, 8 Arsenic, 9 Rock, 10 Pursue, 11 Forte, 12 Reaches, 13 Quarrelsome, 14 Caption, 20 Infuriate, 23 Tributes, 24 Mermaid, 26 Cistern, 27 Delude, 29 Madeira, 30 Grotto, 32 Ulcer, 34 Renal, 36 Synod, 38 Jilt, 43 Piste, 44 Italics, 45 Clue, 46 Sequel, 47 Trite, 48 Patience, 49 Sacred cow, 50 Chateau, 51 Rhine, 52 Codeine, 53 Impractical, 54 Census, 55 Writer's cramp, 64 Deviate, 65 Marbles, 67 Parasol, 69 Shellac, 70 Uranus, 71 Assay, 73 Twirl, 75 Grief, 77 Beef, 78 Span, 82 Soh.

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