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ENABLING BETTER BUSINESS

Left stranded

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

Issues with the trial Connector van service from Thames to Coromandel Town have left Te Puru resident Lee Sturmeay feeling like her independence has been ripped away all over again.

The trial service, funded by a \$40,000 Ministry of Social Development (MSD) storm recovery grant, is being run by the Thames-Coromandel District Council to "reconnect our communities with healthcare, education, appointments, work opportunities and whānau".

The trial began on December 18 and is scheduled to run until March 18. For four days each week, passengers can book a free seat on an 11-seater commuter van running between Thames and Coromandel Town.

When Lee heard about the service, she was ecstatic. "I used to drive, and then six years ago I started having seizures which were diagnosed as epilepsy," she said.

"I've missed my independence so when this Connector thing came up I was so grateful because [it meant] not having to depend on people; being able to go into town and do my own thing in my own time."

Lee immediately contacted Coromandel Taxis, one of two providers contracted to run the trial, and booked a seat.

"I texted and said, 'Am I able to catch it from Te Puru to Thames on that particular date?', and I got back a text saying, 'no problem'," Lee said.

All was well for the first three weeks of the trial. Lee and her neighbour, Jill Berge, who also doesn't drive, booked seats each week, walking to the Te Puru Dairy to catch the van to Thames to get groceries and prescriptions.

"[My husband] was really sick before Christmas," Jill said.

"I was able to go in, pick up a prescription that he needed urgently... And then he ended up in hospital and I was able to go in and visit him."

Then, on January 8, Lee was told she could no longer be picked up.

CONTINUED P2



Lee Sturmeay, left, and Jill Berge are frustrated a transport service from Te Puru to Thames was abruptly stopped after three weeks. Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

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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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'Unimpressed' by trial bus mixup

CONTINUED FROM P1

"Coromandel Taxis actually texted me and let me know that the council had actually stopped - 'prohibited', that was the wording - all en-route pickups and drop offs," Lee said. "It really just floored me, I felt like the mat had been yanked out from my feet."

The cancellation left Lee scrambling to find a ride to make it to her MSD appointment.

"I feel like I'm putting people out by having to go, 'can I catch a ride in with you, can I do this'," Lee said.

When Jill phoned the council, it confirmed the service would no longer stop in Te Puru, and she was advised to get a taxi.

"I can't afford [taxis] being on a benefit," Lee said.

Jill's followup email was replied to with a quote from a council press release: "We're in the process of finalising some stops along the route to increase accessibility. We will share the locations once they are finalised and comply with safety requirements".

Lee also emailed the council but said she never received a response.

"I just wondered why council didn't do their homework to begin with. Why set up an awesome initiative and then go, 'Waka Kotahi has not given authorisation?' [It] just seems a little bit shortsighted," Lee said. "It's almost like it's been set up to fail."

In a statement, council told *The Profile* the van was initially supposed to stop in Coromandel and Thames, saying a direct service was planned to begin with



Coromandel Taxis, pictured, and Thames Taxis are the contracted providers for the 13-week trial service. Photo: SUPPLIED/TCDC

in order to have it in place before Christmas. While en-route stops were planned, they had not been approved by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency at the time the service began.

"We are making sure any stops align with Waka Kotahi NZTA guidelines and are safe places for both vehicles to stop and people to wait," council said.

"Discussions with the service providers prior to the start of the service included council's intention to have the en-route stops included once the locations had been finalised.

"It appears one of the providers included the on-demand en-route service from the outset. The en-route stops were discontinued once council staff clarified with the provider that the service was direct until we had identified loca-

tions that met Waka Kotahi NZTA guidelines and sign-posted these.

"We believe this affected two people and we would like to apologise for any inconvenience or confusion that was caused by this change."

A council spokesperson later told *The Profile* the miscommunication was not the fault of the provider, and was a genuine mistake.

"They've been amazing to work with on the project and we both just want to make sure the service is good for the communities," they said. "We don't have any issues with them as a provider."

Coromandel Taxis declined to comment, saying all communication needed to go through council.

The council also confirmed to *The Profile* it would be making en-route stops in Te Puru, Waiomu, Tapu, Te Mata Point and Manaia

from February 7.

Both Lee and Jill said the most frustrating aspect of the whole ordeal, aside from no longer being able to use the service, was the lack of clear communication from council. "I feel like they haven't promoted it that well," Jill said.

She said she and others of an older generation weren't online regularly, and she was concerned the trial might not receive enough attention to be successful.

"If Lee hadn't told me, I wouldn't have known," Jill said.

"People are isolated in their homes because they have no way of getting anywhere... Any service we would settle for, any means of getting into town and back."

A council newsletter said 130 passengers had used the service in its first four weeks of operation.

Council said it had also taken feedback about communication on board, and would be increasing its advertising for the service, including through offline channels such as newspapers, radio stations, tourism operators and community groups.

"We are welcoming all feedback, as the trial allows us to work through any concerns people may have. We very much would like to see the service succeed, if there is public demand for it."

Council said Waikato Regional Council was responsible for public transport, and was considering potential bus services for the Coromandel Peninsula in its 2024-2034 long term plan.



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Jan 31	Feb 1	Feb 2	Feb 3	Feb 4	Feb 5	Feb 6
 Morning 5:30am 0.7 6:01pm 0.8 Afternoon 11:53am 3.2 Best At 4:56am 5:15pm Set 11:12am Rise 11:11pm	 Morning 12:14am 3.1 12:31pm 3.2 Afternoon 6:09am 0.8 6:39pm 0.8 Best At 5:35am 5:55pm Set 12:09pm Rise 11:34pm	 Morning 12:52am 3.0 1:11pm 3.1 Afternoon 6:50am 0.9 7:19pm 0.9 Best At 6:16am 6:37pm Set 1:08pm Rise 11:59pm	 Morning 1:33am 3.0 1:52pm 3.1 Afternoon 7:36am 1.0 8:02pm 0.9 Best At 6:59am 7:22pm Last Quarter Set 2:10pm	 Morning 2:20am 2.9 2:38pm 3.0 Afternoon 8:28am 1.1 8:51pm 1.0 Best At 7:46am 8:11pm Rise 12:27am Set 3:15pm	 Morning 3:15am 2.9 3:28pm 3.0 Afternoon 9:26am 1.1 9:49pm 1.0 Best At 8:38am 9:06pm Rise 1:03am Set 4:22pm	 Morning 4:18am 2.9 4:25pm 3.0 Afternoon 10:27am 1.1 10:54pm 0.9 Best At 9:35am 10:05pm Rise 1:47am Set 5:29pm

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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	Hr	Low	Mn
Coromandel	-0	04	-0	04		
Whitianga	-0	01	-0	05		
Tairua	+0	10	+0	21		
Whangamata	-0	02	-0	05		
Waihi Beach	-0	11	-0	12		

Cycle tour strengthens BMX family's bonds

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

Watching his friends take part in BMX at his childhood hometown track in Paeroa showed Grant Rennie how inclusive the sport was for all age groups.

Now an adult, not only has he obtained his first podium finish at a major BMX meet - down at the New Zealand South Island Titles in Christchurch - his wife Sonja and four children are all racers themselves.

They recently completed a mammoth 1300km feat by cycling from Hamilton to Christchurch for the competition on January 7 and 8, but it was not without its roadblocks.

A fire broke out at a storage building the very night the family handed in their BMX bikes, helmets and clothing.

"We considered just going to Wellington because touring was our number one thing - and without our bikes and all our gear, we thought there was no way we were going to do [the South Island champs]," Grant told *The Profile*.

"But that night, we had an amazing response from the Christchurch community... and so the decision was made for us. We had to get there."

The family - made up of Grant and his wife Sonja, as well as children Morris, 13, Jared, 11,



The Rennie family about to embark on their 1300km cycle trip.

Photo: SUPPLIED

Nessie, 10 and Perrine, 8 - all performed well at the competition, which made the trip well worth it, Grant said.

"Nessie came away with a fifth in her class; Sonja got a fifth as well, and I was very fortunate to get my first ever podium at a major meet and came away with a third," he said.

It took 26 days for them to reach their destination, and

Grant said not only had the sport of BMX strengthened family ties, but being off the beaten track had, too.

"The best part about it for me was the fact that we got to spend 26 days together as a family with no other distractions. I wasn't going to work, the kids weren't going to school... we just did stuff together," Grant said.

It's not the first time the Ren-

nies have done a cycle tour of this proportion.

They've also ridden from Cape Reinga to Hamilton, and along the way, they rode the Hauraki Rail Trail from Kaiaua to Te Aroha.

With Grant and Sonja both originally hailing from Paeroa, Grant said they often came back to participate in local meets at the BMX track on Taylor Ave.

But the family's two-wheeled adventures aren't stopping anytime soon.

"We've done Cape Reinga to Hamilton, Hamilton to Christchurch: there's only one logical conclusion to this," Grant said, "and the kids are already asking how long it will take to get to Bluff."



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Recognised for 40 years at Countdown

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

Paeroa man Kelvin Peacock knows a thing or two about workplace loyalty.

For 40 years, he has been employed at the local Countdown supermarket, and has witnessed brand changes, stock changes, and the changing faces of his customers.

But while Kelvin's long-standing career will be recognisable to some, as a night fill worker, many in the community may not have noticed his persistent presence.

"He's very fastidious, and very reliable and conscientious," Paeroa Countdown's long life manager Ben McLeod said.

"He's not the guy who's going to cause problems."

Ben has known Kelvin for 30 years and said he was very good at facts and figures, loved his sports trivia, and The All Blacks.

Rifling through photos from the past decades show a young Kelvin smiling among the grocery aisles.

In one photo, he's wearing his nametag, a cap, and bowtie.

On January 18, the team at Paeroa Countdown celebrated Kelvin's 40 years where he was presented with an award by store manager David Ritchie.

"You can't fault Kelvin's loyalty," Ben told *The Profile*.



"There's lots of people he's worked with over the years, and on behalf of them, I want to say thanks very much.

"It is a real milestone in someone's life to achieve this, and I know the people who have worked with him will be



LEFT: Kelvin Peacock receives his 40 year award from store manager David Ritchie. ABOVE: A young Kelvin stands among the aisles of what is now the Paeroa Countdown.

Photos: SUPPLIED

really proud," he said. "Well done, Kelv."



In Brief

SPEED REDUCTION

Waka Kotahi NZTA has reduced the speed from 80kmh to 50kmh on a section of State Highway 2 through Karangahake Gorge. The 600m section stretches from Crown Hill Rd to School Rd, and includes the entrance to the Karangahake Reserve car park. The reduced speed limit will remain in place until Waitangi Day.

TATTOO TO RETURN

The sounds and soul of Scotland is set to return to Paeroa for the annual 31st Annual Paeroa Highland Games & Tattoo at Paeroa Domain on Saturday, February 10. What started out as a small Pipe Bands Competition has grown over the years, and is now a fully-fledged Highland Games, one of only seven such Scottish gatherings in New Zealand, and the only one in New Zealand to hold an Evening Tattoo. This celebration of Scottish culture attracts interest throughout New Zealand as well as internationally. More info: paeroahighlandgames.co.nz.

341 FATALITIES ON ROADS

Aotearoa New Zealand trauma surgeons are calling for "everyday vigilance" on the roads this year after a "heartening" reduction in road deaths in 2023. According to the group, there were 341 road fatalities in 2023, down from 372 in 2022. Nineteen people died on NZ roads over the Christmas-New Year holiday period, compared with 21 over the same period last year. Road deaths rose significantly in 2022 compared to the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 where travel into and around the country was restricted, they said.

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Wheely good time

The Sir Keith Park Memorial Airfield in Thames was packed on January 27. Thousands of people poured through the gates for the annual Wings and Wheels festival. Spectators wandered among the tidy rows of planes, cars, and food trucks between aerial flyovers and musical entertainment. **ALICE PARMINTER** winged in to catch the action.



Rain didn't hamper the military re-enactors as they staged a battle.



A daring aerobatic routine from American Harvard warbirds delighted the crowd. Photos: ALICE PARMINTER



The crew of a WWI Bristol Fighter had time to wave as they passed.



Colin Brookes of Paeroa with the Austin 7 rocket car he built himself.



Beau, 4, was thrilled by the planes.



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'Mystery man' dies at Royal Hotel after travels



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 Morrison took an axe to the door to burst it open only to find a man in his pajamas lying face downwards on the floor.

John could feel no pulse and immediately sent for the police. John, licensee of the Royal Hotel, Thames, had been alerted to the strangely silent locked room by Reed, the hotel porter, just after six that October evening in 1895.

The occupant did not seem to care to be disturbed in the mornings, nor did he care for breakfast.

He had his dinner and tea regularly every day up until the day before. He had arrived at the hotel three days previously having come by the steamer, *Rotomahana*, from Auckland.

He told John he had lately arrived in Auckland from Australia and was travelling for his health. He asked for a bed, and was given room No 19. He said his name was Williamson.

When Constable Bern arrived, he telephoned for Dr Callan, who was soon on the scene.

The man seemed to be between 35 and 40 and appeared to

be either a colonial or an Englishman by birth.

His only luggage was a small bag, containing a shirt, four or five collars, two pair of socks, and some handkerchiefs. He had 9 shillings 6 pence on him. He had no letters, no cards, and no writing of any kind beyond a map. He had nothing with him to identify him.

Amongst his personal effects were a bunch of small keys, suggesting he had a large quantity of luggage somewhere.

Sergeant Gillies communicated with Auckland and in reply received a telegram from Inspector Hickson - "A steerage passenger named Williamson arrived here by the *Tasmania* on September 23rd. Nothing known of him, and no other passenger of that name can be traced at shipping offices here."

Further investigations revealed that a man answering somewhat to the description of the deceased had stayed a few days at Coombes' boarding house in Albert St, Auckland. This man, who gave his name as Brown, but told another it was Williamson, left for Thames in early October with the intention, so he said, of returning a few days later but he had not returned since.

The boarding house staff could not identify the clothes as belonging to their Williamson, and none of the keys found among the man's personal effects could open the portmanteau left by him.

Among the clothing were a dark grey Inverness cape, a blue serge suit, and a pair of tan boots. The tags on the neck of the coat and



The *SS Tasmania*, which brought the mystery man to New Zealand.

Photo: SUPPLIED

cape had the maker's name cut out. Anyone knowing something about the man was requested to communicate with the Inspector.

An inquest on the man calling himself Williamson found that he had told John Morrison he was under medical advice to travel and walk about a good deal.

He used to regularly have a whisky and soda or whisky and water before going to bed but was not addicted to drink.

Dr Callan said that death was due to syncope, or failure of the heart's action. Constable Bern stated that nothing had been discovered to give any clue as to the man's identity.

The jury returned the verdict that the cause of death was failure of the heart's action, caused by longstanding liver disease.

The mysterious stranger was

said to have come across as a highly respectable and educated man of refined habits. Two books were found among his effects - a work on the kola plant, printed in Detroit, Michigan, and another entitled *Planetary and Stellar Worlds*.

In an act of kindness, John Morrison arranged and paid for the man's burial at Tararu cemetery.

He closed his hotel for the afternoon and the funeral was carried out as respectfully as if the stranger had died amongst his own people. The coffin was borne to its resting place by a few good hearted citizens who felt the stranger in a strange land should not be carried to his long home without a friendly hand.

Newspapers asked that in case the news should meet the eye of any person in Sydney who could

give information that would lead to the identification of the man; he was about 5ft 9in tall, of moderately slight build, fair hair, and wearing a slight moustache but no beard.

He was temperate in his habits. He had been long suffering from a diseased liver and weak heart.

He gave his name as Brown or Williamson and it was supposed he came to Auckland from Sydney on the ship *SS Tasmania*, then to the Thames for a walking trip through the goldfields.

In November, the police received two letters - one from a lady named Williamson residing in Victoria, stating that she had seen a notice of the death of a man of that name at Thames, and as a relative of hers was missing she requested a description of the deceased.

Sergeant Gillies complied with the request, giving full particulars. The second letter was from Mrs H C Williamson, enclosing a photo of her husband, whom she last heard of 15 months before, when he was in Sydney. The photo was shown to Mr Morrison, Dr Callan, and others, and they all agreed that it bore no resemblance whatever to the deceased.

There were no more leads as to the man's identity and mystery and peculiarities followed him to his grave - plot registers record him as being buried under the name Williamson at both Tararu and Shortland cemeteries.

He was still unidentified three years later when records suggest a John Conway, who died at the Tararu Old Men's Home, was buried in the Tararu plot with him.

Thames Art Gallery
604 Tararu Road, Thames Coast

February Featured artists

<p>LEIGH MATTHEW</p> <p>Leigh is a wood carving and stoneware artist. He uses traditional methods in wood carving, and glazes his stoneware to create a organic, weathered look</p>	<p>JAN LINKLATER</p> <p>Jan enjoys using colour to enhance the reality of her landscapes and still life artworks. She draws inspiration from her environment</p>
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Authorised by Scott Simpson, Parliament Buildings, Wellington.

Restored *Ariana* joins 'the 100 club'

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

It was a bright but brisk day on the Waihou River as the *Ariana* was relaunched in celebration of her 100 years.

The boat, which has been lovingly restored by long-time mariner Peter Vandersloot, had recently passed her tri-annual survey to ply the waters around the wharves of the Historical Maritime Park in Paeroa.

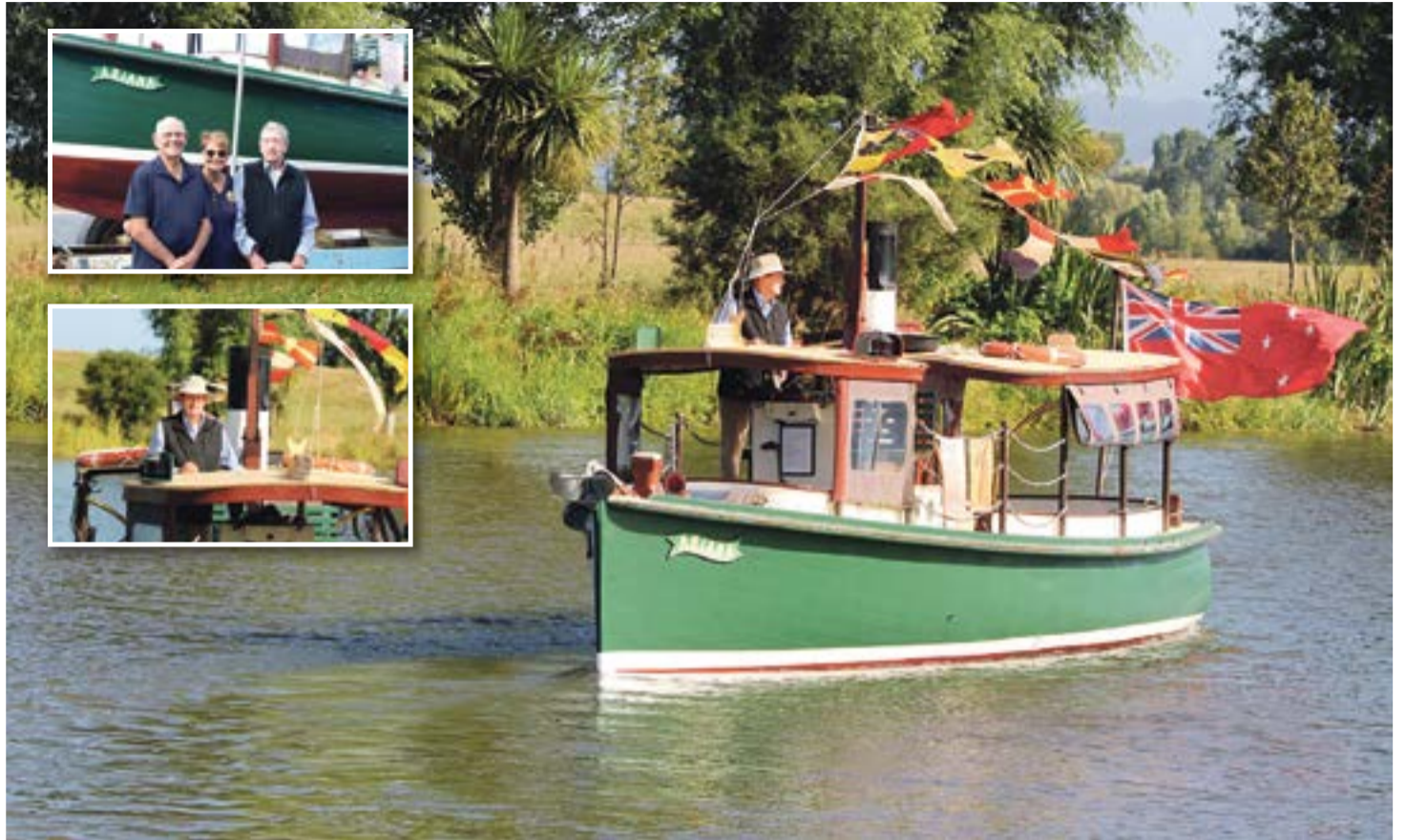
It's hoped that she, alongside her sister vessels - paddle boat *Tamiti* and river-cat *Kitiawa* - will relive the days of water transport on the Hauraki Plains for another century.

"I found *Ariana* sunk in mangroves in the Weiti River north of Auckland, a total wreck," Peter said, "but she had a good pedigree."

Ariana, made of kauri timber, was built by Lane Bros in Judges Bay in 1923.

She was in private ownership until the end of World War II and was named *Allison* while she longline fished in the Hauraki Gulf.

After being discovered by Peter more than 20 years ago, he decided to restore *Ariana's* hull and repurpose her as an 1880s river ferry in the style of the Northern Steamship company, the vessels of which



Peter Vandersloot discovered *Ariana* sunk within mangroves 20 years ago. INSET TOP: Paeroa Maritime Park's Colin and Gloria James, alongside Peter, celebrate *Ariana's* 100 years. BELOW: Peter takes the helm of the *Ariana* during her relaunch. Photos: KELLEY TANTAU

worked all the river ports in the Firth of Thames.

"John Lidgard, a well known boat builder and designer, did the drawings and there is *Ariana*," Peter told *The Profile*.

"The whole project took two

years."

Peter donated *Ariana* to the maritime park but said for two decades he'd taken the helm and journeyed with her along the waterways between Thames and Te Aroha.

"I needed a rest," he said.

Now part of the maintenance crew at the historical park, Peter, following *Ariana's* relaunching on January 24, said even though she's now joined the "100 club", it's

hoped she will enjoy the Ohinemuri and Waihou rivers "and all their tributaries" for another century.



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Rural Life

Open season for Waitakaruru sunflower farm

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

Two Waitakaruru dairy farmers are sharing their field of sunflowers with the rest of the district, in a gesture that's bound to put smiles on faces.

Kylie Evans and Fran Walker run Two Girls Farm, a floristry and sunflower field business along Back Miranda Rd.

After opening for the first time to the public last year, they were pleasantly surprised to find people as "happy" and "giddy" about the flowers as they were.

"They're so big and bright and lovely," Fran said. "We drive past them every day and it's amazing how quickly we've been able to watch it grow from a paddock of grass into these big, yellow sunflowers. It's cool we had the option to do this."

As friends, florists, and dairy farmers, the sunflower venture started out as a side hustle for the pair, which fit in well with their farming operations.

"Sunflowers need the temperature in the soil to be about 15-16 degrees, so as soon as you hit that, it's about the same time maize gets planted for us dairy farmers, so we knew we couldn't really bugger it up," Fran said.

"Because we had the planter coming in to plant the maize, they could literally plant the sunflowers at the same time."

This year, they are encourag-



Two Waitakaruru dairy farmers are preparing to share their field of sunflowers with the public this weekend. Photo: SUPPLIED

ing guests to spend time among the blossoming aisles - by bringing blankets and lunch or dinner and enjoying the surroundings.

They've added props to take photos, such as a tractor and a swingset, and have also installed picnic tables and umbrellas for people to sit in the shade.

A point of difference this year will be the offer of pony rides during the weekend of February 3-6, between 5pm-6pm.

"It's such a good family friendly thing to do and there's nothing else in the Hauraki area like this, where you can spend the day or a few hours and not have to pay too much money,"

Fran said.

"And the kids love exploring through the sunflowers and choosing which ones to pick," Kylie added.

DETAILS: Guests can visit the field at 243 Back Miranda Rd between February 3-6, 10am-7pm. Further opening dates may be added following assessment of the fields. Entry: \$5, under 5s free. The field is also open for private hire during the week for those wanting to have exclusive access. People are encouraged to bring their own secateurs and the cost is \$2 per sunflower stem. For more info find Two Girls Farm on Facebook.



Fran Walker and Kylie Evans run Two Girls Farm, a floristry and sunflower field business along Back Miranda Rd. Photo: SUPPLIED

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Rural Life

Waikato gun owners get behind new firearms registry

Waikato firearms owners have registered 8189 firearms to date, Police say.

Licensed firearms owners across the country have responded well to the registry, with it taking just seven months to get to the 100,000th firearm recorded into the system.

This is from nearly 10 percent of the approximately 235,000 licence holders in New Zealand.

Te Tari Pūreke Firearms Safety Authority executive director, Angela Brazier said she'd like to thank all responsible firearms owners who had filled in the registry.

So far, Canterbury is the area with the highest number of firearms registered with 14,289, Southern follows closely with 12,616, Central with 12,119, Bay of Plenty 10,098, Waitematā 8582, and then Waikato with 8189.

Ms Brazier is urging all of Waikato's 21,954 firearms licence holders to register their firearms.

"The firearms registry is all about preventing firearms getting into the wrong hands," she said.

"Digitising the licencing system enhances our ability to detect unlawful and criminal activity.

"Along with preventing the sale and purchase of stolen firearms, the registry provides a better way for Police to trace where firearms used by criminals have come from."

Disrupting the flow of firearms to criminals worked in tandem with other



Waikato farmers are supporting the new gun registry, Police say. File Photo: PIXABAY

Policing initiatives that target organised criminal groups and gangs, she said. "These separate but complementary strategies are together making it harder for criminals to possess and use firearms and are making our communities safer.

"When fully rolled out, the registry will provide a picture of all lawfully held firearms and arms items in New Zealand.

"This will give greater transparency when firearms are changing hands and ultimately make the availability of firearms to the black market more difficult," Ms Brazier said.

DETAILS: To register your firearms online, head to www.firearmsafetyauthority.govt.nz or call 0800 844 431 Monday to Friday 8.30am-5pm, except public holidays.

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Gardening

Harvest time in hottest month of the year

Being one of the hottest months of the year, February is one of the main harvest periods.

It's an in-between season in the garden - harvest time has arrived with vengeance, and it is a time for preserving, freezing and storing produce for winter and spring use. Make successive planting and sowing of edible crops and annuals to prolong flowering.

Beans – dwarf and climbing. All must be sown very early in the month no later than the first or second week. Beetroot – late sowings can still be made ready for winter harvest.

Broccoli and cabbages seedlings can be planted in well-prepared beds at intervals to provide a succession of late winter harvest. Carrots – harvest as required. Further sowings can be made but ensure you regularly cultivate and aerate soil for best results.

Cucumber, eggplants and peppers and tomatoes – continue to harvest crops and preserve or freeze excess or share with neighbours. Onions – harvest time has arrived. If wet weather is on the horizon, set out onions on shallow trays indoors where they can dry and cure. Clip tops



Harvest time has arrived with vengeance in the vege garden.

File Photo: PIXABAY

and roots and store in open mesh tray or boxes to dry.

Kumara – harvest once the leaves start to yellow. Cut back the foliage and carefully lift the kumara with a fork. Leave them on the ground for a few days to cure. Cover with a sack or newspaper at night. Store in a cool dry place.

Plant seeds of leeks, broccoli, cabbage, winter lettuce, silver-beet, spinach, and carrots.

Soak your garden every four days rather than shallow watering. And water early morning or early evening. Mulching is a good way to preserve that moisture and reduce weeds.

Continue to pick your flower-

ing roses, dead head old flowers and spray to combat pests and diseases.

Especially in humid weather. Bulbs and perennials – plant, divide, weed and cultivate throughout the winter months while plants are dormant.

Prepare ground incorporating fertiliser. Sow seeds of winter

flowers like pansy, viola, primula, polyanthus, calendula, cineraria, poppies, lobelia, alyssum and snapdragon.

Continue harvesting mid-season pip and stone fruit, tree crops, berries and citrus. Harvesting daily encourages late fruiting. Earlier maturing varieties will soon be followed by main season varieties. Hopefully the humidity hasn't spoiled too many crops.

Main late season peaches and plums are now fully mature. Irrigate trees thoroughly to swell the fruit size before harvest if dry weather prevails.

Continue with the pest control and watch for codling moth.

Strawberries – with the completion of the main fruiting season, old plants can be dug out.

Refresh your herb garden with some new plants for a continued supply – basil, chilli, coriander and parsley.

Perfect time for sowing new lawn is late February. It is a busy time coming up for lawn mowing as growth rate increases. Keep watering existing lawns if dry.

Gather all the discarded plants once harvest is complete and add to the compost. Turn heaps regularly.

Enjoy your garden.

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5 Non planting Day	6 Non planting Day	7 Plant root crops, trees and shrubs	8 Plant root crops, trees and shrubs	9 Non planting Day	10 New Moon	11 Plant above ground Crops, Liquid Feed
12 Plant above ground Crops, Liquid Feed	13 Non planting Day	14 Non planting Day	15 Plant above ground crops	16 Plant above ground crops	17 Non planting Day	18 Non planting Day
19 Non planting Day	20 Plant above ground Crops, Liquid Feed	21 Plant above ground Crops, Liquid Feed	22 Non planting Day	23 Non planting Day	24 Non planting Day	25 Full Moon
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SPORTS

Athletics fun

The 2024 North Island Colgate Games took place in Auckland at Mt Smart Stadium on January 5-7. Both Paeroa and Thames were well represented at the event, with several athletes aged between seven and 14 years attending from both clubs. "It was a fantastic three days and all the athletes enjoyed themselves, setting many personal bests and soaking up the vibrant atmosphere of the stadium," Sarah Rawnsley, of the Paeroa Amateur Athletics Club, said.



Thames athlete Ryder Moore strides out towards the finish line.



Sienna Moore from Thames clears the bar in the girls grade 13 high jump event.

Photos: SUPPLIED



The Paeroa Amateur Athletic Club team.



Paeroa's Liam Rawnsley took home four first place pennants.



Mahalia Thompson meets Zoe Hobbs.



James Rawnsley in the long jump.



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JOIN A CLUB

In the February 21st issue Valley Profile will be running a feature for clubs.

Whether your club is a sports club, a social club or a service club you can use this opportunity to call for members and/or volunteers or to let our readers know more about what you are all about.

If you would like more information on this please contact *Nikki* on either 022 130 3885 or nikki@valleyprofile.co.nz



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Hauraki Tyre & Battery owners Tania and Craig celebrate five years since taking over the business.

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"Happy New Year! Welcome to 2024," from Tania, Craig and the team at Hauraki Tyre & Battery, who will celebrate taking over the Thames business five years ago in February. "Your tyre budget, comfort, mileage and vehicle handling are all a priority to the Hauraki Tyre & Battery team," Tania said. The big yellow tyre shop welcomes everyone to pop in. "They can take you through their vast range and source most tyres with a two-day turnaround." Hauraki Tyre & Battery stock all major tyre brands and offer puncture repairs, wheel alignments, balancing, entry level, mid-range and top quality tyres for most vehicles, and Exide batteries with extended warranties.

The business has had a "big response" to offering afterpay as a payment option, and offers free tyre pressure and battery checks. Supporting the community by ensuring vehicle safety is one thing, but the team also likes to get involved at local events. Craig and the team hoped everyone made it to the Whanau day at Thames South School last month. "We were stoked to see so many families down there enjoying the free activities for kids of all ages," Tania said. "We particularly enjoyed watching kids on the Bouncy Tiger that we sponsored - wasn't he cool?" Call in and see us today or email us at hauraki-tyres@xtra.co.nz or Ph 07 868 8182.

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Work programme announced for Cathedral Cove access

The Department of Conservation has announced the work it will undertake to determine viable, safe and resilient long-term solutions for visitor access and experience at Coromandel's Cathedral Cove.

DOC Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki regional director Tinaka Mearns said she was now able to share how DOC planned to approach the next phase of work for the visitor experience at the site.

"A key aspect of that work has been ensuring the hillside is not moving, and we have stable land to explore what resilient long-term track rerouting options could work," she said.

With land stability a prominent aspect, DOC has commissioned further monitoring, based on expert advice from Tonkin + Taylor. Monitoring results are expected in June 2024. From February through to April, DOC staff will work alongside Ngāti Hei to develop options and conceptual ideas, which will then be shared for wider public engagement – including an online survey from January 27 until mid-February.

Tinaka said options would then be set against the land stability information, DOC's legislative obligations, cost-benefit analysis and the results of community engagement. Those options will undergo an internal DOC review in the context of DOC's visitor risk management framework.

"Within a few months we should have a clear picture of whether a track re-routing is feasible and safe, or if we need to consider other alternatives," Tinaka said.

The Cathedral Cove work programme timeline and milestones could change depending on cohesion with Treaty settlement obligations, historic protection aspects

guided by Heritage NZ, and development of a business case. If viable new options are presented, or only one option can be pursued, the work programme will also be altered.

DOC would continue its public communication throughout this work, Tinaka said.

"We're very aware of the importance of the Cathedral Cove track to the local tourism economy, and also the wide range of views on what can or should be done there," she said. "It's vital for DOC to have a robust, detailed and properly resourced plan for this site, to ensure visitors ultimately have a safe and enjoyable experience."

"Our goal is to reopen the track – but it must be done safely and in a durable and pragmatic way that lasts."

"Short-term solutions which do not offer an experience resilient to climate change are not viable as far as we're concerned – we need to invest sensibly."

Tinaka said it had been encouraging to read and hear reports of how busy Coromandel had been this summer.

"Coromandel has faced a succession of difficult summers in recent years, so to hear about local businesses being well supported by holidaymakers is great for the wider community and the region's economy."

She re-emphasised the track to Cathedral Cove, in its current condition, was not safe and presented a risk to the type of visitors wishing to go there and would remain closed.

Visitors are urged to consider options for marine-based experiences for Cathedral Cove, the tracks and lookouts made available for this summer, and explore the wider Coromandel Peninsula.

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Place yourself in someone else's shoes

OPINION



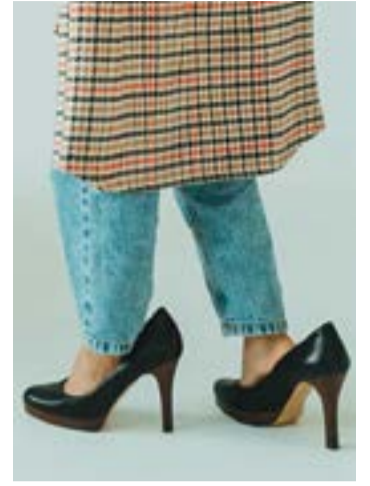
By MICHAEL WILKES

My youngest daughter abso- lutely loves putting on her

mum's oversized fancy shoes and walking around in them. She trips, she laughs, she stumbles and sometimes she cries. It is a joy to watch... mostly... until it turns to tears. It's funny, we have so many moments that happen in life, that are beautiful, things that are moments to behold, moments that can teach and shape us. Yet so often we are so busy. Busy looking at our phones, responding to messages, listening to music, or busy doing all the important tasks we need to tick off. So busy that we miss the

beauty right in front of us. Or we miss the lesson because we don't pause to consider it within. As I paused to enjoy the moment and observe these oversized shoes and the tiny feet sliding around in them I considered the age old saying - to consider placing ourselves in someone else's shoes. Sometimes people annoy us, sometimes they are difficult, sometimes people are simply hard to handle. Yet as I watched my daughter, I considered this. Maybe, just maybe, if I lived the same life as some of the difficult people I know, maybe just

maybe, if I was in the same living situation; I too would trip, slip and stumble too. And so for me, it is so important to hear and know someone's story. We all know difficult people, but maybe if we can take a moment to know their story and consider life in their shoes we may experience a small shift. For me this allows space for a little more patience and a little more compassion. I wonder what life will teach you when you too pause to embrace the moment before you. - Michael Wilkes is a Living Well Trust Youth Worker



SPORTS REPORTS

Send your sports reports and photos to editor@valleyprofile.co.nz

Thames hosts national croquet comp

CROQUET

With a backdrop of blue skies, sparkling blue calm sea, and blue flowering agapanthus, the Thames Croquet Club with its five full sized courts was the perfect venue for the Croquet New Zealand 3+ Championship tournament recently. Players with handicaps of three or more battled it out over the three days of January 12-14, playing six games of singles a day in the scorching heat of 28 to 30 degrees Celsius. The standard of play was high and kept local and visiting spectators entertained.

Tournament manager Lyn Stowers from Morrinsville said the Thames Croquet Club was the perfect host. "You did yourselves proud, keeping our visiting players hydrated and fed," she said. "You went that extra mile."

Players attended from Canterbury, Wellington, Wairarapa, Manawatu/Whanganui, Auckland, Bay of Plenty and Northland, with two from Thames Croquet Club.

"While the numbers of players were disappointing, I feel the time of the year played a huge part," Lyn said. "We did end up with a really good three days, with the winners not being confirmed till the last round on the last day."

Two players were equal on wins. John Watson from Manawatu-Whanganui took out the Championship win with higher net hoops over Ken Geenty from Wellington, who took out second. Third place again came down to net hoops, with four

players having the same number of wins. Third place was awarded to Geoff Price from Canterbury, with the highest net hoops of the four. With such close competition, tournament referee Pat Anderton was kept busy. "The Thames Croquet Club are to be congratulated on all the work that was done in the lead up to this tournament to fulfil the requirements necessary in the preparation of the lawns," Pat said. "Even with the unfortunate water ban by the council and the extreme heat over the tournament, the lawns held up very well. The standard of play and sportsmanship exhibited by all players were a pleasure to witness."

Two of the players were locals. Lin Parsons, and Thames club president Sheryl McConnell gamely entered the competition to boost numbers, and despite being up against players with much lower handicaps, had an enjoyable, if challenging three days. "On reflection, after three days of play in very hot conditions, I decided I did enjoy the tournament," Sheryl said.

"It was a stretch for me to compete against very good players, who I found were generous and gracious in their encouragement. I enjoyed meeting players from as far away as Christchurch and as far north as Waipu. My game lifted to meet the demands and I came away feeling very pleased to have joined such a great group of people with a love of the game I love."

- Supplied by Thames Croquet Club



From left: Geoff Price, third; Ken Geenty, second; John Watson, first.



Geoff Price congratulates Ken Geenty on winning their last game.



Geoff Price looks on as Ken Geenty strikes the ball. Photos: SUPPLIED



Local Player Lin Parsons is watched by Theresa Jessop from the Bay of Plenty.

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SPORTS

National tournament bowls into Coast

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

It will be all hands on deck at the Thames Coast Bowling Club this Waitangi Day weekend, as the club's members prepare for an influx of players and spectators for the 50th Aotearoa National Māori Bowls Tournament.

The tournament, hosted this year by Tainui Rohe, begins on February 2 with a powhiri at Matai Whetu Marae in Kōpū. Two days of play will follow, with both mens' and womens' heats taking place at five different clubs in the valley, including Thames Coast, Thames, Kerepēhi, Hauraki and Paeroa.

The top 16 mens' and womens' teams will finish off the event at Thames Bowling Club on Sunday afternoon, and Bowls NZ will be live-streaming the semi-finals and finals to see who takes out the national titles.

Around 500 players from across the country have registered for the tournament, along with numerous supporters.

Thames Coast Bowling Club president Kaye Bunn said her club was busy preparing for their hosting duties over the two days of heats. There are 128 players scheduled to play at Thames Coast - which means eight games and five full meals to plan for.

"We've got a band of [club members] who are going to be



Thames Coast Bowling Club president Kaye Bunn has got all hands on deck to prepare for this weekend's tournament. RIGHT: The recent mens' two-day tournament at Thames Coast Bowling Club warmed up the green nicely in preparation for the upcoming national tournament.

volunteering to do all the food - we're feeding everyone," she said.

"For dinner we've got oysters, mussels, king prawns, with a couple of hot dishes; venison, roast pork, potatoes. And then for lunches, we've got beef and lamb... They won't go away

hungry."

For the tiny coastal club, playing host to such a large group has its benefits.

"It's good to see the smaller clubs being involved in a big way," Kaye said.

"It's such a big thing for the community, I'm talking for the whole of the valley, for it to be here, [and] I think the success of it will put us on the map a bit, to actually say, we can host these big tournaments."

Kaye was hopeful the public would take advantage of the opportunity to see some top-tier sport.

"An event like this, it's a chance for people to go along, and maybe think, 'I'd like to have a go at that,'" she said.

"It's all about encouraging people into the sport and I think if they watch the competition that's going on, it quite often hooks people."



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HAURAKI'S HOME OF  SUZUKI

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