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

Dawn McMillan's writing nook is an unassuming little shed tucked into a corner of her garden in Waiomu Bay.

Inside, the walls are adorned with posters and notes from her young readers.

The Thames Coast author's desk sits at one end, framed by shelves stuffed full of more than 200 picture books, junior novels, educational texts, poetry, plays and early readers she has penned.

It's this impressive stack of texts which has earned Dawn a New Year Honour for services to children's literature.

Dawn was "stunned and honoured" to be appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit. "It's not something you do [for the accolades].

"It's a team effort... There's a huge journey involving wonderful people. There's the kids, the publishers, the illustrators, then there's me. I'm just very privileged to have belonged to some very good teams.

"And it's been really nice to have the support of my husband and family and friends - all the times [my husband's] cooked dinner for me while I've been typing away. In no way is it an individual pursuit."

Although Dawn has loved writing since she was a child, her writing career only really began when she moved to Waiomu over 30 years ago, after spending most of her working life as a teacher. "As soon as I got here, I just had this urge to write," she said. "The first book I had published was actually set in Waiomu, at the beach."

Nature and the environment feature heavily in Dawn's stories, inspired by the view from her studio window which overlooks the pohutukawa trees sheltering Waiomu Bay. "They sort of stand guard. They've got an energy that

I like, and I actually notice that energy when I'm writing. And sometimes I come out here and write at night... Somebody said night time is the best time to write because everyone else is asleep so you've got the ideas to yourself."

Not all of her tales are serious, of course. Dawn also loves writing about people's journeys, and stories like her *I Need a New Bum* series talk about life in a whimsical, lighthearted way. "I write sensible stories, and I write silly stories.

"The bum books are the big-

gest selling series, of course. I think we're up to about number 13 on that, and it's all really about the young boy and his family and problem solving. It's not about what bums look like, particularly."

It's this child's perspective that keeps her work relevant, Dawn said, and she loves meeting and spending time with children whenever she can.

"I love writing in rhyme too, for children, because as a teacher I can see that the rhyme gives them the reading clues, the patterning,

and the sound repetition, and so they can read it quite easily."

"[And] it's really important that an adult enjoys the book as well as a child - I'm really happy when an adult and a child share a book, because I think reading to kids is really important."

Over the years, Dawn's books have been read in classrooms throughout New Zealand and around the world. Some have been translated into Māori and Braille.

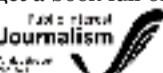
I Need a New Bum even went viral when it was read by the "Scot-

tish Granny" in an online video.

But it's the response from children that Dawn treasures most.

"The feedback from the kids is really special to me, because this is what makes my writing life.

"They send me their work, they send me their stories. I've got a story on a wall from a little girl in Italy... Somebody sent me his comic. I don't expect them to do it, but when you get a book full of neat comments, it's really awesome."



Author's work is all for the children

Waiomu author Dawn McMillan, MNZM, treasures the feedback, notes, and stories she receives from children.

Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

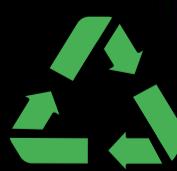
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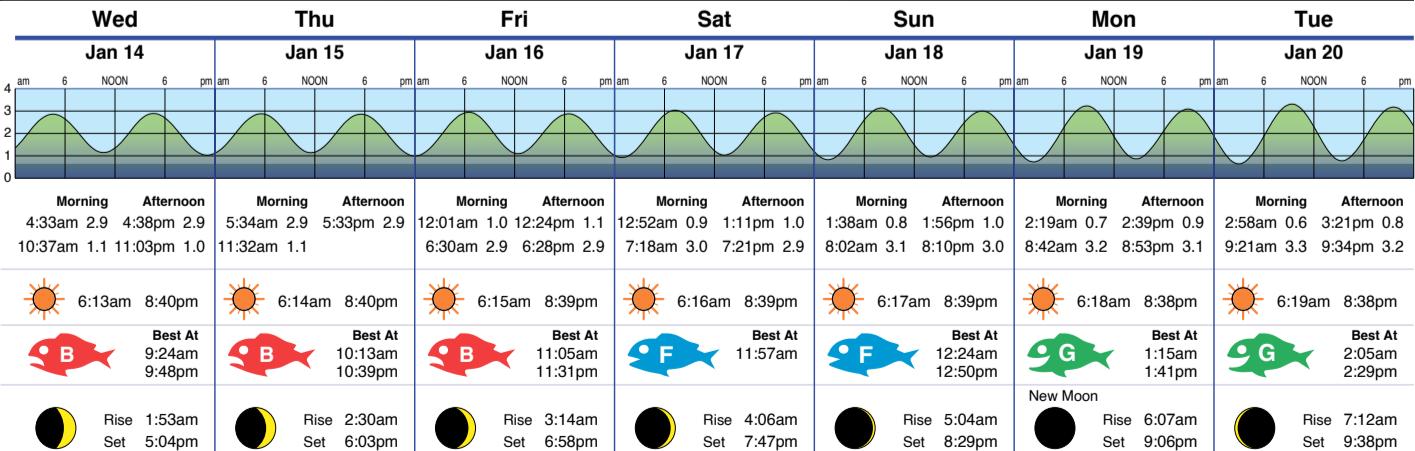
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Thames Tides



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MOON AND FISH KEYS

New Moon

First Quarter

Full Moon

Last Quarter

Fair Fishing

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	Mn	Hr	Mn
Coromandel	- 0	05	- 0	04
Whitianga	- 0	01	- 0	05
Tairua	+ 0	10	+ 0	20
Whangamatā	- 0	03	- 0	06
Waihi Beach	- 0	22	- 0	16

disappointing that after a good night, it is then ruined by intoxicated youth in denial that New Years is over." Seven youths were arrested in Whangamatā, and one in Pauanui.

LOST HIKER RESCUED

An 80-year-old man was saved by a mum and her two teenage children after he got lost while hiking in the Kauaeranga Valley near Thames on December 28, Police said. The man was only wearing shorts and a singlet and apart from his mobile phone was carrying no other emergency supplies. Police were alerted to the missing man at about 10pm after he called his son, who raised the alarm. The man had run out of water and had collapsed on the trail around 100 metres from Crosbie's Hut, Police said. A helicopter was deployed but was unable to land due to deteriorating weather. Enquiries by Police Search and Rescue with the Department of Conservation (DOC) discovered a tramping party of a mother and her two teenagers was staying at Crosbies Hut, and they were contacted to help find the lost man. The mother and her teens left Crosbies Hut and within a short time found the elderly man. They formed a human heat circle, helping the man to warm up, before returning to the hut to wait for a rescue team. Police and Land Search and Rescue teams were then able to retrieve the man at first light.

BOAT OVERTURNED

Waikato Regional Council is urging boaters to take extra care after a boat overturned attempting to cross the Tairua bar on December 30. The 5.5-metre boat rolled at around 6.40am after hitting a large wave and taking on water. The two people onboard were wearing lifejackets and were able to swim to shore unassisted, council said. The vessel is submerged in Shoe Bay awaiting salvage efforts.

The couple who kept athletics on track

By KELLEY TANTAU

After decades of shaping athletics behind the scenes, Sylvia and Peter Mauder were stunned to learn they had both been awarded the King's Service Medal in the 2026 New Year Honours for services to the sport.

The Paeroa couple told *The Profile* the news came as "a complete surprise".

Sylvia had just returned home from walking the dog to find Peter reading an email from the Honours Unit at Parliament. Assuming the message related only to him, she "urged" Peter to accept the honour. It wasn't until later, Sylvia said, when she checked her own inbox, that she discovered she had also received an email.

The recognition acknowledges the couple's four decades of service to athletics, much of it carried out in administrative and officiating roles in the Wellington region.

The Maunders spent countless hours travelling to meetings, officiating at competitions most weekends, and working to ensure the sport ran smoothly at every level. "We've both just done what we thought was right for the sport," Sylvia said.

"While we loved what we were doing, it all stemmed from a desire to support our three children who all achieved representative honours for New Zealand at various meets. We knew we didn't have the skills to coach any of them, but what we could do for them was to ensure that the sport continued to run smoothly for them in both avenues where we were reasonably



Sylvia and Peter Mauder have both been awarded the King's Service Medal. competent."

Both Sylvia and Peter were drawn to athletics as students - Peter at school in Levin, where he competed in middle-distance running and cross country, and Sylvia in Christchurch, where she specialised in sprints and the long jump. "That led to moderate success at intercollegiate sports events, and what eventually led to a lifetime love and spare-time-career in the sport," Sylvia said.

Sylvia's contribution includes athletics administration and officiating, beginning in the 1980s and went on to serve as secretary

of the Wellington Track and Field Committee for 10 years, followed by three years as chairperson. She also served as Centre Delegate to the Athletics New Zealand Council for 18 years. Her work extended to major events, including the Colgate Games, where she served on the organising committee and as competition secretary when the event was hosted in Wellington.

After gaining her National Technical Official qualification in 2000, Sylvia officiated at national and international championships, including the World Masters Championships and IPC World Para

Championships. She was made a Life Member of Athletics Wellington in 2004 and received the Athletics New Zealand Merit Award in 2015, before retiring in 2024 after 40 years of service.

Peter's involvement dates back even further, beginning in the 1970s with the Scottish Harriers.

Over the years, he has held numerous leadership roles, including secretary, handicapper, chair of the Wellington Junior Committee, and both the Track and Field and Centre Committees. He was appointed as Honorary Surveyor to the Centre in 1975, a role he

fulfilled for 30 years. Like Sylvia, Peter officiated at Newtown Park most weekends for nearly two decades. He worked at national and international championships across New Zealand and Oceania and was an internationally qualified road race course measurer. He was also made a Life Member of Athletics Wellington in 2004 and received the Athletics New Zealand Merit Award in 2014.

The Maunders said they were proud of their behind-the-scenes contributions to athletics, as well as supporting young athletes to develop and achieve their goals.

They also said sharing a lifelong love of athletics and contributing to the sport together as a family was the "glue" that held them together. "We've both been inspired by the achievements of our three children, and throughout our careers that has been the root of our involvement and the glue that held us together," Sylvia said.

Though the Maunders said it was a hard decision to step away from the sport, and that there was "definitely a gaping hole" in their lives, they had great satisfaction in knowing younger, qualified people were now taking their places.

"That's great for the sport," they said. They believed athletics held a special place in New Zealand, offering athletes the chance to be part of a group, compete to the best of their ability, and have fun, while also providing a pathway to international representation.

Now retired to Paeroa, the Maunders were enjoying a life of relative anonymity, able to watch athletics from the sidelines.



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Questions?

Contact Council 07 862 8609 or 0800 734 834.

This project is partially funded by central government's Better Off Funding package to invest in the wellbeing of our communities.



When and where?

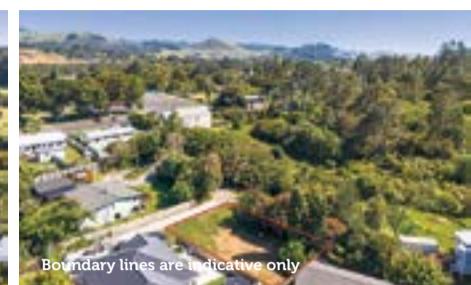
We will be in Ngātea the week of 5 January 2026 and working through the Plains over the summer.



STORY MAP



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Waihi

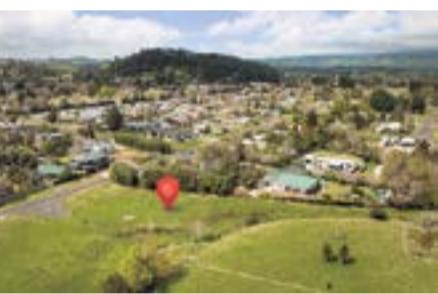
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From acquaintances to friends through DNA

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

Two Turua residents have discovered their shared roots and formed a close friendship, thanks to results from a DNA kit.

When Colin Wilson moved to Turua around five years ago, one of the first things he did was find a local seamstress.

He got in touch with long-time resident Doreen Douglas, and over the next year the pair became acquaintances.

But when Colin turned up to the Turua Market one Sunday morning, it wasn't to get his pants mended.

"He came up to me and said, 'I know you're Doreen. Are you Doreen Douglas?' And I said yes," Doreen said.

"He said, 'I'm your cousin'. And then he mentioned Anna Petrina (née Sanvieg), who was my great-grandmother, and Eliza, who was my grandmother."

"I got on that Ancestry DNA years and years ago. And then out of the blue comes this: you've got a second cousin," Colin said.

"It blew me away, actually. And then we got around to my great-grandmother, Eliza, and that sealed the deal then."

Colin and Doreen are a generation apart on what is quite a complex family tree.

Their common link is Eliza Wilson - Doreen's grandmother and Colin's great-grandmother.



Colin Wilson and Doreen Douglas with a photograph of their common ancestor, Eliza Wilson. Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

Eliza was a colourful woman who lived a tough life, Doreen said.

"I didn't know her very well - I only remember visiting her once."

"She was only in her 60s when she died, [but] she would out-survive one lover and three husbands," she said.

"[Her first husband] died in the first World War. And she was only in her 30s when her

second husband died... I don't know how she survived."

Eliza's first child was Les Wilson, born out of wedlock to an unknown suitor when she was 18 years old.

Les - Colin's grandfather - was raised by Eliza's mother, Anna. "[Eliza] was forbidden to marry the guy who got her pregnant," Doreen said, adding that they never knew who the suitor was.

Meanwhile, Eliza went on to marry three times. Her first marriage resulted in three children, while her second marriage, to George Ernest Thornburn, produced five children.

The eldest of those five was George Thomas Thorburn, Doreen's father. "So Les Wilson is my father's half-brother," Doreen said. "And you know, we always knew about him, but we never met him."

Since discovering their connection, Colin and Doreen have compared family trees and filled in a few gaps. Theirs is the closest match they've found through DNA testing, they said.

"[When] I got a DNA test for Christmas from my grandson, I did it, and then that was it," Doreen said.

"You get matches all the time from different people, but I never get names I recognise."

Meanwhile, Colin, who did his DNA test around a decade ago, said he has had between 400-500 matches.

"But some of them are sixth cousins... a lot of it is quite distant, but that's the whole ancestry idea of it, really."

Which makes their connection that much more special, the pair said.

Living in the same small town means they've also been able to get to know each other well.

"Colin does such a lot for me," Doreen said. "He does jobs for me, if there's heavy lifting, he does it. I can just call on him and I say, 'oh, Colin, can you come down?'"

In return, Doreen bakes for Colin, and teaches him to garden. She still mends his clothes. But mostly, they simply sit and chat.

"He's become a really, really, really good friend."



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'Pre-historic man' lecture wows country audience



As part of a Valley Profile series, **MEGHAN HAWKES** searches through old newspapers to bring you the stories Thames Valley locals once read about themselves.

1888

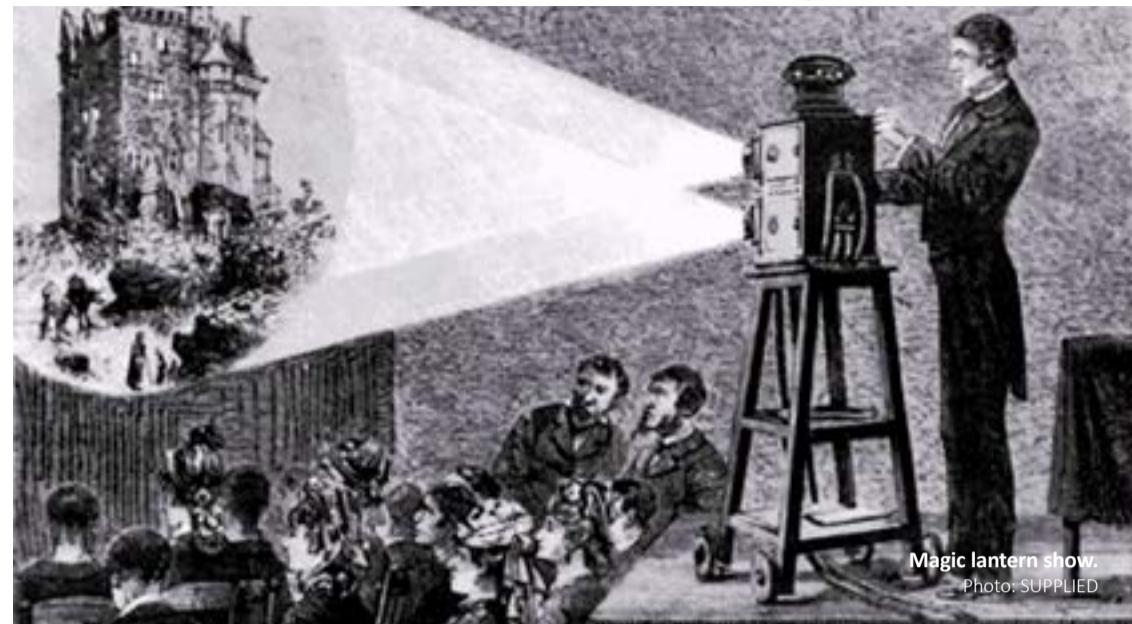
At Paeroa Josiah Martin, an Auckland photographer, delivered a lecture in the hall on 'Pre-historic Man.'

There was not a very large attendance and the magic lantern views were not very clear. However, the lecture itself was absorbing. It traced the means by which ancient man, with his comparatively feeble frame, fought for existence against the huge animal life of the Stone Age, and how eventually the germs of intelligence gradually unfolded in the human species.

The lecturer's style was easy, and his vocabulary suited to a country audience, with no long technical words and phrases, such as the town mouse usually overawed his country cousin with.

Meanwhile, Waitekauri was agog at the news James Grayden, stricken three years before with paralysis, had been cured by Madame Duflot, a Canadian healer, at Auckland.

Madame, aboard a golden chariot drawn by three white horses, was driven down Queen St by a little woman in black. Besides her



Magic lantern show.

Photo: SUPPLIED

sat an exotic looking man and behind them was a brass band, playing merrily. They drove into the heart of the crowd, commencing operations at once.

Pale, careworn, wrinkled, miserable faces, many of them bandaged, thronged round the wagon. Mr Grayden, who could not speak, apart from a few words, and who could only just hobble about on crutches, was placed behind a screen for about 25 minutes. When he emerged he was to all appearances a sound man again, actually dancing to the music of the band.

He then rushed to the Thames steamer without crutches, and called out to Captain Farquhar to "tell all the Thames people I am cured".

The Waihi plains, which a year previously had been a bleak and

windy place, now looked vastly different. At the Waihi gold mining company's ground, an enormous and valuable quantity of building material and machinery lay strewn around.

There were three or four forges at work, and a large number of carpenters and brick layers as well as those employed in the mine itself. The main engine and machine house were still being constructed and would contain five floors over 60 feet in height.

On each of these floors different portions of the process for reducing ore would be fixed. The brick-layers were well ahead with their work and the assay house and furnace were complete. The large Cornish boiler had been placed in position, and the carpenters were busy framing the bed for the en-

gine.

At Thames an increased police patrol between midnight and 4pm was called for as the most dangerous fires occurred between those hours and were not discovered until they had a firm hold.

When a recent fire broke out at 4am in John Casey's bakehouse at Grahamstown, the fire spread with remarkable rapidity and was not extinguished until several buildings had been consumed.

Had there been the least wind the whole block would have been destroyed. The Grahamstown fire bell needed attending to as it was very difficult to ring and gave a poor alarm.

It was so inferior, and in such a bad location, that half of Thames did not know that there had been a fire.

Chris' Quiz

Weekly quiz compiled by Chris Parminter

- What is the name of the wizarding school in the *Harry Potter* series?
- The TV show *Better Call Saul*, which aired from 2015 until 2022, is a spinoff of which other TV show?
- Where in New Zealand is the famous pōhutukawa linked in Māori tradition to spirits departing the world? a) Cape Farewell, b) Cape Kidnappers, or c) Cape Reinga?
- What happens to the tint of transition lenses when the wearer moves from a dark area to a lighter area? a) They get lighter, b) they stay the same, or c) they get darker?
- Denmark, Greenland and Norway all use which currency? a) Guilder, b) Krone, or c) Lira?
- In terms of weight, one stone is approximately how many kilograms? a) 1.55 kg, b) 3.45 kg, or c) 6.35 kg?
- Flora, Fauna and Merryweather are the names of the Fairy Godmothers in which Disney film? a) *Cinderella*, b) *Fantasia*, or c) *Sleeping Beauty*?
- Which legume plant is used to make tofu? a) Broad bean, b) navy bean, or c) soybean?
- 66 per cent of the total land area of the Hauraki Plains is used for which type of farming? Dairy or sheep and beef?
- Which band produced the album *Abbey Road*?



ANSWERS: 1. Hogwarts; 2. Breaking Bad; 3. Breaaking Bad; 4. Cape Reinga; 5. Krone; 6. 6.35 kg; 7. C. Sleeping Beauty; 8. Soybean; 9. Dairy farming; 10. The Beatles.

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On the Land

Boating safety team out in force this summer

Every summer, Waikato Regional Council's maritime officers hit the region's coastal and inland waters in force to help boaties stay safe and comply with the rules of the Waikato Navigation Safety Bylaw.

Recreational Harbourmaster Hayden Coburn said council's annual Operation Neptune programme, from Boxing Day to 11 January, 2026, includes boating safety checks and enforcement of the region's boating bylaws.

"It's the skipper's responsibility to ensure they know the rules and comply with them on the water," Mr Coburn said.

"We'll be pulling over vessels to say gidday and chat about the rules. If we notice unsafe behaviours such as life jackets not being worn, excessive speed, or vessels towing skiers without an observer, there may be some harder conversations."

"We want boaties to have fun, but it's also a very busy time of year out on the water so we want to make sure everyone gets home safely from their summer break."

For Operation Neptune, the council has bolstered its Maritime Services team of 12 to include 28 volunteer staff from other areas within the organisation.

They will patrol popular recreational areas like Raglan and Kāwhia on the west coast, Coromandel Peninsula waters, and the Waikato River between Lake Apūnui and Lake Ōhakuri and from Lake Karāpiro to Port Waikato.



Monitoring officers Fiona Forrest and Andrea Stokes recruited as maritime officers for Operation Neptune in the 2024-25 summer break. RIGHT: Recreational Harbourmaster Hayden Coburn.

Photos: SUPPLIED

The maritime officers may issue breach notices that can result in fines of up to \$200 per offence.

Last summer, Operation Neptune staff had over 1159 interactions with the public. A total of 261 bylaw breaches were identified, resulting in 31 diversions, 74 formal warnings and 156 fines.

Mr Coburn said it was important for skippers to familiarise themselves with the rules of the region as they may differ.

For example, in the Waikato

region, people on vessels six metres or under need to wear a life jacket while the vessel is underway. Larger vessels are required to have a life jacket for each person on board, but they're only required to be worn under certain circumstances, such as bar crossings or times of heightened risk.

Boating rules can be found on Waikato Regional Council's website, the MarineMate mobile phone application, and are prominently displayed on signage at

boat ramps around the Waikato.

This year, two skippers have been convicted in cases brought to court by Waikato Regional Council under the Maritime Transport Act 1994.

In August, a skipper was convicted and fined \$3000 in the Hamilton District Court for operating a vessel in a dangerous manner after he capsized on the Raglan Bar in December 2024, putting himself and his wife and son at risk of serious injury or



drowning. Earlier this month, another skipper was convicted in the Thames District Court on two charges of careless operation of a vessel after he failed to ensure the vessel's propeller had stopped before recovering swimmers from the water at the Alderman Islands on Christmas Eve 2022. He was fined \$7200 and ordered to pay \$8000 in reparation.

Mr Coburn said bar crossings could be risky and boaties needed to be well prepared, properly equipped and ready to change their plans if conditions are unsafe.

"We urge all skippers to follow safe boating practices, avoid alcohol while operating vessels, and ensure engines are off when swimmers are in the water."

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On the Land

\$20k in grants for library, museum

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

The New Zealand Community Trust's November round of grants have helped push along two community building projects in Hauraki.

The Paeroa and District Historical Society received \$10,000 towards re-roofing its building, while the Turua Hall Domain and Community Society was granted \$10,000 for plumbing and drainage costs for its new library building.

Turua's Cynthia Bates said work on the library portacom was proceeding nicely, with the first lot of foundations laid and the building lifted into its permanent position on November 7. Further concrete foundations, for the wheelchair accessible ramp and decking, were poured on December 16.

"It's exciting it's finally on its foundations," Cynthia said.

"Now the [committee] is just starting to look at the stuff that they need for the inside as well... the sewage connection as well as the indoor handicapped bathroom suite, which will be the only [public] one in Turua."

"That was one of our big selling points: we were going to be giving the entire community, including those that are less



The new Turua Library building is hoisted into place.

mobile, access to the portacom and a bathroom."

The library project has received just over \$110,000 in grants so far, from the New Zealand

Community Trust, Lottery Community Facilities, Grassroots Trust, Akarana Trust, Thrifters, and Barnardos.

Cynthia said the committee

was aiming for a March opening for the library.



Flood risk audit welcomed

Waikato Regional Council has welcomed the findings of a mitigating flood risk report by the Office of the Auditor-General.

The report sought to understand how well council ensured flood protection infrastructure effectively mitigates the risk of flooding along rivers, coasts and inland bodies of water and how planning might be improved.

Council was found to have "sound processes for understanding of the performance of its flood protection infrastructure, good asset information, catchment-wide planning, and a systemic process for prioritising investment".

However, it also has work to do when it comes to decision-making on intended service levels that will mitigate flood risk effectively into the future.

The report was tabled in Parliament on December 11.

"The report should give communities comfort that this council is doing a good job when it comes to the management of flood protection assets, while at the same time providing direction for the ongoing understanding of flood risk," council chair, Warren Mahe said.

"We could do more. The question is how much more can be done at a time when the central government has imposed rates capping, affordability is an issue for our communities, and significant changes are proposed to the structure of regional government."

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Teen stands tall with Tu Kahikatea award

By KELLEY TANTAU

A Thames Valley teen has been recognised with an award that celebrates her years of leadership, dedication, and positive contributions to her community.

Bridgette Marshall, from St Francis Catholic Church in Thames and a student at Hauraki Plains College, was presented with a Tu Kahikatea Award by Bishop Steve Lowe at St Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland on December 7.

The Tu Kahikatea Awards are presented annually by the Diocese of Auckland and recognise young people who have made outstanding contributions to their communities.

Bridgette was one of 14 recipients this year and was nominated by Sr Paula Cronin from St Francis in Thames.

She said receiving the award made her feel "recognised and appreciated" for her contributions to the church over the past six years.

"I can't remember a time I wasn't involved with St Francis," Bridgette told *The Profile*.

"I started school at St Francis, and went there for the first few years of primary school before moving to Ngatea Primary when my family moved houses.

"I started altar serving at 10, giving communion at 14, and have continued to be actively



Bridgette Marshall with Bishop Steve Lowe.

Photos: SUPPLIED

involved ever since."

Bridgette said she was on the altar almost every week, guiding younger servers until they felt confident, and even then sat in the front row where she could help if she was needed.

As she grew older, she went on to become an Extraordinary

Minister of the Eucharist, assisting with the distribution of communion, and has also been involved in youth groups, Life Teen Summer Camp, and contributing regularly to Mass.

Having just completed Year 12 at Hauraki Plains College, Bridgette said she had a strong

interest in law, politics, and social justice, and hoped to become a family lawyer and possibly enter Parliament.

"Ever since I was young, I have always had a passion for right and wrong," she said.

"I believe that my responsibility as a strong and confident



Bridgette with mum Dr Kathryn Hamlet and poppa Mike Hamlet.

young woman, is to stand up for those who society has shut down, to give a voice to the voiceless. "This has inspired me to be a family lawyer and maybe even a Member of Parliament one day."

"Tu Kahikatea" can be translated as 'Standing Tall', and the annual awards are named after the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference statement: Tu Kahikatea: Standing Tall - A Framework for Catholic Ministry with Young People in Aotearoa New Zealand.

For Bridgette, giving back had always been about "becoming a part of something bigger than yourself".

"The community around you shapes who you are, so I believe it's so important to be a part of making that community strong, welcoming, and positive.

"Small actions are what matter the most," she said. "If everyone did one nice thing a day, our world would be a much better place."

Recreational water quality monitoring underway

Waikato Regional Council's weekly monitoring of popular rivers, lakes and coastal sites is now underway to check they are safe for swimming and other recreational activities.

The annual programme involves mostly weekly collecting and testing of freshwater samples for levels of E. coli and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) at 32 sites, and seawater samples for E. coli and enterococci at 13 sites.

The water quality at over 80 other river locations is also estimated based on monitoring data.

E. coli and enterococci are indicators of faecal contamination,

while cyanobacteria can produce toxins harmful to people and animals.

The monitoring results are shared with Land Air Water Aotearoa (LAWA), territorial authorities, iwi, community groups and public health officials in our region. Results that may have public health implications will be communicated, with signs put in place.

The public can find out the water quality at the last time of sampling on LAWA's Can I Swim Here? page: www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/swimming.

Waikato Regional Council Water Scientist Dr Mafalda Baptista

said many of our freshwater sites are graded poorly for E. coli.

"As a rule of thumb, you should avoid swimming near potential sources of contamination such as flocks of birds, stormwater or wastewater outlets. Avoid swimming for at least two to three days after heavy or prolonged rain, even for sites that have good water quality," Dr Baptista said.

Algae occur naturally in our rivers, lakes and streams, and flourish during hot and fine conditions. However, algae can rapidly bloom to harmful levels. Play it safe – if you see water discolouration avoid contact or choose another site to swim. Find out

more at waikatoregion.govt.nz/algal-blooms.

Most of Waikato's beaches maintain excellent long-term grades, although the estuarine swimming spots see more fluctuations during rain periods due to flushing from the catchments increasing the freshwater influence.

Waikato Regional Council Coastal and Marine Science Team Leader Dr Michael Townsend said Earth Sciences New Zealand (ESNZ) predicted a warm and wet summer this year.

"With the expected conditions, we'll be keeping a close eye on our estuarine sites. We always

recommend checking LAWA, especially if it's been raining in the week prior.. As always, if it doesn't look right, stay out."

Hauraki-Coromandel freshwater sites monitored weekly until the end of February include: Kauaeranga River, Hikutaia River, Ohinemuri River, Waihou River, and the Waitakaruru River. Coastal sites monitored until the end of March include: Buffalo Beach Whitianga; Hot Water Beach; Tairua Beach; Pepe Inlet at Tairua; Pauanui Beach; Whangamatā Beach; Whangamatā Harbour entrance; Onemana Beach; Whiritoa Beach.



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Profile
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Foster parents needed for dogs and kittens

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

The SPCA is on the search for foster parents for kittens and dogs, as centres across the country prepare for a busy breeding season.

More than 10,000 kittens passed through SPCA centres between November 2024 and April 2025, and the charity said it was anticipating another busy season this summer.

Thames SPCA manager Brent Thomas said foster parents were an essential part of the centre's operations.

"Last week we had about 83 animals in our care... throughout New Zealand there is a massive influx in kittens right now, and a crisis of dogs," he said.

"When [animals] get adopted out at this time of year, we've got other centres around New Zealand that will be overflowing, so they will just send us more."

Becoming a foster parent is as simple as filling out a form online - prospective parents need to be over 18, and have spare time to spend with the animals. Kittens are generally a short-term foster, as they are able to be adopted out once they reach a kilogram in weight, while dogs are often fostered for three or four months before finding a home,



SPCA Thames manager Brent Thomas with two of the centre's furry residents.

Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

Brent said.

"We supply everything: kitty litter, any vet treatments required, fleas, worms, the whole lot. It's just donating their time and a space," Brent said.

"Sometimes, especially for kittens, the foster period may only be two, three, four weeks. But it still helps us out im-

mensely that we're not coming in as staff having to feed, clean and look after these animals in this environment. And also, if they're doing it in their home, there's less risk of them catching disease from other kittens that are coming in. So it protects them from disease as well, being out in a foster home."

Some foster animals required more hands-on care; Brent said there were opportunities for people who want to nurse sick or injured animals through their rehabilitation period, and people willing to bottle-feed animals are also always in demand.

Foster parents come and go,

he said. Dog fosters in particular are hard to come by, as people end up forming emotional attachments to the animals and finding it hard to let go. But the benefits for the animals themselves are massive.

"For a dog, the best environment to grow up in is a home environment," he said.

"If they can grow up in a home until they find their forever home, that's way better than growing up here."

And for those who want to help but lack the time or space to foster, there is always volunteering.

"A lot of the time we have over 20 dogs and puppies here. And even if you put 10 minutes' training into each one, that's a lot of time," Brent said.

"They benefit from that every day, just doing the basics with them. So anyone that wants to volunteer, even just as a dog walker, that's amazing."

"The more people you can get here, the better. Even mowing lawns or sweeping, doing dishes, folding, washing - there's just so much to constantly do."

DETAILS: To find out more about becoming a foster parent or volunteer visit www.spca.nz/how-you-can-help/volunteer or contact Thames SPCA, Ph 07 868 6830.

NZ On Air
Journalism

Safer Coromandel urges care on the road this summer

Another summer has arrived on the Coromandel Peninsula.

Our rohe once again filled with locals, holidaymakers and visitors - swelling our population far beyond its usual size.

With that comes pressure on our roads, beaches, bush tracks and waterways. And once again, this summer brought tragedy, close calls, and far too many moments where things could have ended very differently.

Behind every headline is a family, a whānau, a group of friends, and a community that feels the loss.

Safer Coromandel exists because of seasons like this. It wasn't created by accident. During the summer of 2010-11, 13 people lost their lives on the

Coromandel Peninsula. It was devastating, and it became a turning point.

Local agencies came together with a shared determination: we had to do better. From that moment, Safe Summer Coromandel was born - and over time, grew into what you now know as Safer Coromandel.

Today, I bring together around 17 local agencies and community organisations, all working toward the same goal: preventing death and serious harm across our district.

That collective includes New Zealand Police, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, St John, Surf Life Saving, Maritime NZ, ACC, the Department of Conservation, Waikato Health, and community groups focused on family

wellbeing.

Thames-Coromandel District Council supports the partnership by providing co-ordination through its emergency management function.

You may hear my voice on Coromandel's CFM - our locally owned radio station - helping share safety messages on air, online, and through local newspapers like this one. Because timely, local information saves lives.

This summer reinforced why that collaboration matters. When agencies work together, messages are clearer, responses are faster, and communities are safer.

Thames-Coromandel District Civil Defence Controller Brian Carter says co-ordination is critical during peak

season.

"By working together under the Safer Coromandel umbrella, our agencies can align our messaging and resources to reach more people - and ultimately keep more people safe."

As the season winds down, the message remains just as important. Safety doesn't stop when summer ends, and neither do we. Safer Coromandel is a year-round commitment, because every life lost is one too many.

So as we reflect on the summer that's been, we leave you with the reminder you'll hear often from us: See it. Share it. Sort it. Coro's safer when you are. Kia noho haumaru,

- Ayana Piper-Healion
Safer Coromandel

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Song Sung Blue (132 mins) M. Based on a true story, two down-on-their-luck musicians (Hugh Jackman and Kate Hudson) form a joyous Neil Diamond tribute band, proving it's never too late to follow your dreams.

Sentimental Value (134 mins) M. An intimate exploration of family, memories, and the power of art. By Joachim Trier. Tons of Golden Globe 2026 nominations and tipped to win the best film Oscar.

Pets on a Train (87 mins) PG. When a train unexpectedly starts up, taking only pets with it, the animals discover that Hans, a badger with a grudge, is behind it all. A roguish Raccoon will do anything to save them.

Zootopia 2 (108 mins) PG. Detectives Judy and Nick find themselves on the trail of a mysterious reptile who arrives in Zootopia and turns the animal metropolis upside down.

The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants (96 mins) PG. SpongeBob and his Bikini Bottom friends set sail. A seafaring comedy-adventure that takes SpongeBob to the deepest depths of the sea.

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Gold standard behind Thames Valley rugby

RUGBY

By KELLEY TANTAU

A new book is shining a light on the often-forgotten figures who helped shape Thames Valley Rugby's greatest successes.

Written by rugby historian Kelly Plummer, *The Gold Standard* explores more than a century of Thames Valley Rugby Football Union history, with a particular focus on the selectors and coaches who guided the union through its most successful periods.

Established more than 100 years ago, the Thames Valley Rugby Football Union had "many ups and downs" in the years since it was granted affiliation to the New Zealand Rugby Football Union in 1922, Kelly said. It spent its early decades struggling to compete with better-resourced neighbours Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, and later Counties. The 1920s through to the 1940s were difficult years, with wins and consistency hard to come by.

That began to change in the 1950s.

Kelly's book tracks this shift in fortunes, beginning with influential coaches Bill Smith and Wally Knight, whose leadership between 1951 and 1954 helped set new standards for the union.

The term "Gold Standard of



Rugby historian Kelly Plummer with his new book, *The Gold Standard*.

Photos: DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

Thames Valley rugby" - first used in a 1954 Auckland vs Thames Valley match programme - is the inspiration for the book's title.

"In research and writing *Swamp Foxes Alive!* [published 2022], I was keen to find out more about the successes that Thames Valley had from the 1950s onwards," Kelly told

The Profile. "Undoubtedly the coaches from 1951 to 1954 - Bill Smith and Wally Knight - had a huge influence, and this led me to find out more about them and then look at other successful periods in Thames Valley rugby history, and the story of the coaches at such times.

"Knight and Smith were particularly inspiring," he said,

"and later came Norm McMillan with his great record against overseas teams, and after the National Provincial Competition was introduced in 1976, the five coaching combinations that have won championship titles since are all included.

Matt Bartleet was very innovative, and David Harrison and Joe Murray built on his work to

ensure that Thames Valley has been one of the top four Heartland teams since 2018."

Kelly's research highlighted just how important family support was, and he said he was impressed by the encouragement of wives and children over the years, which helped create "very strong partnerships".

He also uncovered new details and corrected official records when he learned that Jim Mitchell of Waitakaruru, not Jock Mitchell of Katikati, refereed the 1961 Thames Valley vs Waikato match featuring the five Clarke brothers - a correction welcomed by Mitchell's son, Hauraki North historian Peter Mitchell.

Another highlight for Kelly was meeting up Michael Knight, son of Wally Knight and an All Black in 1968.

Overall, he believed recording these stories was vital.

"As our national game is an integral part of New Zealand's culture, I believe that it is important to record such stories as those in *The Gold Standard*.

The families of these coaches now have a written record of their accomplishments [and] anyone interested in rugby has an insight as to how they operated."

DETAILS: *The Gold Standard* is available for \$35, including postage and packaging. Copies can be ordered by contacting Kelly Plummer at kel.den@xtra.co.nz.



Artist Impression.
View from Marine Avenue.

A proposed new Waihī Beach Medical Centre

He aha ō whakaaro
Tell us what you think

Primary Health Care (PHCL) has asked Council to lease part of the Beach Road Recreation Reserve so a new medical centre can be built to meet the growing needs of the community. PHCL is a charitable organisation that operates the Waihī Beach Medical Centre on Wilson Road.

Council has agreed in principle to explore this proposal, which will include reclassification of the reserve. However, before a decision is made, we want to understand what you think.

Join the kōrero

Online, wānanga ipurangi - For more information and to provide your feedback, visit: yourplace.westernbay.govt.nz/proposed-new-waihi-beach-medical-centre

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Tim McWatters, who operates the company with his wife Althea, said the bulk of

their clients were farmers and councils. "They all keep getting us back, so we must be doing a good job," he said.

"We cover South Auckland, down to the Waikato, to the Coromandel Peninsula and the Hauraki Plains."

Tim said the future plans for the company, which currently has four staff, was to expand if an opportunity arose.

CONTACT: Get in touch by phoning 027 278 5384.

BBQs, batteries drive summer bin fire risks

By KELLEY TANTAU

As summer brings barbecues, outdoor gatherings, and a shift in daily routines, Waste Management is reminding households to take extra care with what goes into their bins, with one wrong item having the potential to ignite a fire and force otherwise recyclable material into landfill.

The Paeroa Volunteer Fire Brigade attended a call at Tirohia Landfill last month after a lithium battery, disposed of incorrectly, ignited a pile of cardboard.

Hauraki Mayor Toby Adams, also a volunteer firefighter, said the brigade frequently responded to incidents at both recycling centres and landfill sites.

"Even if [something] was in the bottom of your own recycling bin and it caught on fire, it would smoulder away underneath, so there'd be a lot of intensity that you couldn't quite see, and it's the same when you get a big pile of recycling piled up," he said.

"We've just got to keep removing product and putting it out, and removing product and putting it out, so it does take a while to get [the fire] out; it's not necessarily a visible flame that's always just at the top."

Waste Management North's executive general manager Mike McSaveney said lithium-ion batteries were a leading cause of fires because they could spark or explode if damaged.

Gas canisters and aerosol cans could also ignite under pressure, while hot ashes from barbecues were "a common



A lithium battery, disposed of incorrectly, ignited a pile of cardboard. Photo: SUPPLIED

summer culprit", especially when they were put in the bin before they were fully cold.

Heat, pressure, and friction can quickly turn one item into a fire," he said. "The consequences can be significant. Fires in trucks or at transfer stations put our people at risk and can damage equipment. If a load catches fire, the contents can no longer be safely recycled, which means more waste

heading to landfill. Fires can also create smoke and air-quality issues for nearby communities."

McSaveney said incorrect disposal of items was an ongoing hazard that required constant attention.

"As our population grows and more products contain hidden batteries, the risk increases. We also know people are in holiday mode over summer, so the wrong thing can end up in the wrong bin more easily."

"The best step anyone can take is to check the guidance from their local council if they are unsure about an item. A quick check can prevent a fire."

As of December 17, the Paeroa Volunteer Fire Brigade had attended 201 calls-outs for 2025.

Mayor Adams believed they surpassed their yearly target in September.

"It's the way the season is, and sometimes people aren't as careful as they can be, particularly with scrub fires, so we've had quite a few of those," he said.

"We also attend a lot more medical events now than we've done in the past."

DETAILS: Household batteries can be disposed of at Hauraki District Council's Service Centres while car batteries and household batteries can be disposed of at HDCs Transfer Stations. Both HDC Transfer Stations are compliant hazardous goods facilities and accept aerosols, gas cylinders and tanks. For more information on recyclables accepted or responsible disposal of waste and recycling in the Hauraki District, visit website at www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz/rubbish-recycling.

SPORTS

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Paeroa bowls champs

Paeroa Bowling Club held its club championship competition recently. Pictured from top: Pairs Champions Wal Stokes and John Pullan; Triples Champions Peter Rowling, Kevin Lockley and John Pullan; and Fours Champions Peter Rowling, Kevin Lockley, John Pullan and John Tarrant. "Paeroa Bowling Club is very proud of these champions and congratulates each of them after a well fought competition." - Supplied



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Pauanui surfer places seventh in Peru

SURFING

The New Zealand Junior Surfing Team made waves on the international stage in December, finishing tenth at the ISA World Junior Surfing Championship in Peru with a Pauanui local part of the line-up.

The team finished the campaign with two seventh place finishes by Piha's Leia Millar and Pauanui's Lola Groube in the Under 18 Girls Division as well as a thirteenth place finish by Goldcoast visitor Vitor Bauermann in the Under 16 Boys Division, all achieved on the penultimate day of the event.

Australia backed up their 2024 gold medal team result with the United States in second and Brazil in third. Host nation Peru finished in fourth.

Pauanui 14-year-old Lola Groube finished seventh in the Under 18 Girls Division for New Zealand.

With low scores across the board for

her opponents, Groube hunted a big wide set in her final match-up.

But as she scrambled for the shoulder of the wave to catch it, the lip slammed her in the back making her belly ride to the bottom before being unable to recover and ride the wave for potential progression.

The Peru waves suited the Pauanui surfer who quietly went about her work during the week posting big scores and selecting the best waves on offer to advance through multiple rounds.

This year's event was held at Punta Rocas, a consistent right and lefthand point break that has delivered good conditions to date.

There was a record 424 participants from 57 countries taking part. New Zealand bettered its 11th place finish achieved in 2024.

Pauanui surfer Lola Groube in action at the ISA World Junior Surfing Championship in Peru. Photo: SUPPLIED



CLASSIFIEDS - Deadline 12 noon Monday

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Waihi Bible Chapel Ph. Num 021 522 668 Come read the Word. Learn Scripture (King James). You want the truth, it's all here. Come help us read and learn. Bible Study Wednesday nights 6pm	Mowing, hedges, fencing, gardening, carpentry, painting, retaining walls, welding, waterblasting. Work is good quality and I will not attempt to work outside of my skills. Insured. Dennis Schuler 022 129 0169	Professional roof painter. Mario Kerkhof 027 961 4055	Handyman Services  THAMES HANDYMAN & BUILDING SERVICES Building, home maintenance & general gardening services Phone: Fleur or Crighton • 0273 913 283	Storage Unlimited 25 Ngati Maru Highway Kopu, Thames Clean, secure, dry Units available 7 x 3.6m and 7 x 5.5m Phone 07 868 9944	Public Notice	Roads to be closed in Paeroa: • Willoughby St, from intersection of SH26 (Arney St) to intersection of Corbett St. • Mackay St, from intersection of SH2 to intersection of Willoughby St. • Hall St, from intersection of SH2 to intersection of Willoughby St. • Corbett St, from intersection of Albert St to King St. • King St - entire length. Alternative provision for ordinary vehicular traffic will be made with signs, cones and barriers to redirect traffic on detour. It will be an offence under the above regulations for any person otherwise than under authority of an authorised permit to use the road for ordinary vehicular traffic during the proposed period of closure. Any objections should be directed to Transport Manager on 07 862 8609 or email info@hauraki-dc.govt.nz by 21 January 2026. D A Speirs Chief Executive Hauraki District Council  www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz
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Keep swinging - a breakthrough is coming

OPINION



By MICHAEL WILKES

The other day I was out splitting wood. You know how it goes - you line up a log, swing the axe, and it splits clean in half. Feels good, right? Well, this wasn't one of those times.

This log was stubborn. Knotty, twisted, and solid as a rock. I swung. And swung. Hit af-

ter hit. Sweat dripping. Arms burning. Barely a dent.

I'll be honest - everything in me wanted to walk away.

The thought crossed my mind more than once: "What's the point? I'm wasting my time here."

But then I told myself, "Just a few more swings." And so I kept at it. And you know what? It was the next couple of strikes that did it. CRACK. The log split clean in two. Chips flew, and there it was - done.

I stood there catching my breath, and it hit me: That's life.

How often do we find ourselves in situations where we're swinging hard - day after day - at a challenge, a relationship, a dream... and it feels like nothing's changing?

Maybe it's your health, your family, your finances, or some goal you've been chasing for years. You've put in the effort, and the results? Barely a dent. It's exhausting. Discouraging.

But here's the thing—some-

times the breakthrough is closer than we think.

That log didn't look ready to split. It still seemed solid. But under the surface, each strike was doing something. Weakening it.

Building pressure. Preparing it for the moment it would give way.

And isn't that how most victories happen? Quietly. Slowly. Invisible at first. Until suddenly - everything changes.

So if you're pushing hard

right now and wondering if it's worth it - don't give up. If you know deep down it's something worth fighting for, then keep swinging. One hit at a time.

Your breakthrough might be closer than you think.

Michael Wilkes is a youth worker with Thrive Trust, supporting mentoring and resilience programmes across Thames and Paeroa. To support his local youth work or follow stories and insights, find him on social media @michaelwilkes.kiwi. Enjoy these articles? Grab his book The Unschooled Life at michaelwilkes.kiwi.

Health & Wellbeing

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Prioritise health and wellbeing

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

To live well in a region as lively and eclectic as the Hauraki-Coromandel, we must prioritise our health and wellbeing.

That's why *The Valley Profile*'s monthly Health and Wellbeing feature is a dedicated space designed to connect our community with local resources that support living healthier, more balanced lives.

In today's fast-paced world, taking care of our mental, physical and emotional wellbeing has never been more important, and this feature is here to make it easier for you to find the support and inspiration you need.

Each month, this feature will spotlight a variety of local businesses, services and organisations making a difference in our communities.

Whether you're wanting to find local health and wellness services, a chiropractor, contact care practitioners, a hair salon and more - the Health and Wellbeing feature will point you in the right direction. While there's no one-size-



fits-all approach to wellbeing, everyone deserves access to resources that support their unique journey.

So whether you're taking the first step or continuing down your wellness path, we hope this feature becomes your monthly go to guide for living well, right here in the Hauraki-Coromandel.

DETAILS: To find out more and to join the Health and Wellbeing feature, call Davidda on 022 174 3988 or email: Davidda@valleyprofile.co.nz.



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SPORTS

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'A job I love to do': teen's referee journey

TOUCH RUGBY

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

A Netherton teenager is making her mark on the touch field - but most days you'll find her behind the whistle, rather than sporting a team jersey.

Fifteen-year-old Adelle Johnson is a Level One touch rugby youth referee.

She's been training as a ref for a couple of years, and has got her sights set on refereeing at the Touch World Cup when it's hosted in New Zealand in 2028.

Adelle picked up the hobby after accompanying her mother, Michelle, to a meeting about training more referees for the junior rugby space.

"In year nine I got the opportunity to ref at the Ngatea touch module for the first time, and I thought, yeah, I think this is the hobby for me," Adelle said.

She quickly applied to referee at the Māori Touch Tamaki Tournament, where she qualified for her Level One referee badge.

Adelle now spends large chunks of her time on touch fields across the Waikato.

She refs for the Ngatea interschool module in spring, travels to Steele Park in Hamilton every week to ref for adult teams, and has recently returned from a stint as a youth referee for the Māori Touch Nationals, held in Rotorua on December 6-7.

"I was one of 85 refs selected [for Nationals]," Adelle said.

"It was a fun experience reffing all the adult teams and watching the teams do their hakas.

"And since I'm a Level One, you get paired with a senior to help coach you on more things... It's improved my skill level a lot since I first started."

Not all her time is spent refereeing

though. Adelle also plays - she has been on the Thames Valley under-16 team for the past two years, and has also represented Hauraki Plains College on its junior girls touch, rugby, second XI hockey, and social hockey teams.

Switching between playing and refereeing has improved her skills immensely, Adelle said.

"With reffing, you know the rules and you know what to do and you know how far you need to come back.



Fifteen-year-old Adelle Johnson is commanding the pitch as a youth touch rugby referee.

Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

"I've still got a lot to learn with regards to my reffing and positioning myself - the more I work on it, the more I can improve on it."

- Adelle Johnson

"And with playing, I can integrate my reffing into my playing skills so I'm a better player for my team and for myself," she said.

"But I've still got a lot to learn with regards to my reffing and positioning myself - the more I work on it, the more I can improve on it."

With all the training comes other improvements as well, like self-confidence and conflict management skills.

"It's only a one-in-a-million chance that I'll get someone who swears at me or starts trying to pressure me or anything, but if so, I can easily just stop the game, tell them to either leave the field or shut up and just continue playing, because I'm the one who's taking up my time to come and ref these people, and I don't have to," Adelle said.

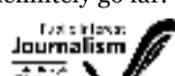
"It's a job I love to do, and if someone's going to pull me down, I'm not going to let them do it."

Meanwhile, next year's goals are already firmly in Adelle's sights. She wants to referee for men's teams in Hamilton, and she's also applied to be a referee at the Māori Touch Tamaki tournament in January.

"The men's teams - it's fast, and it will give her the best opportunity to upskill," Michelle said.

"The Hamilton Monday night module has Ifor Jones, who I'm pretty sure is [one of] New Zealand's top touch men's players.

"And if she can ref people like that and get the respect from all the other refs, then she'll definitely go far."



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233

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

7	8	3	6			1		
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HARD

233

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HARD

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2	5	4	7	8	1	3	9	6
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MEDIUM

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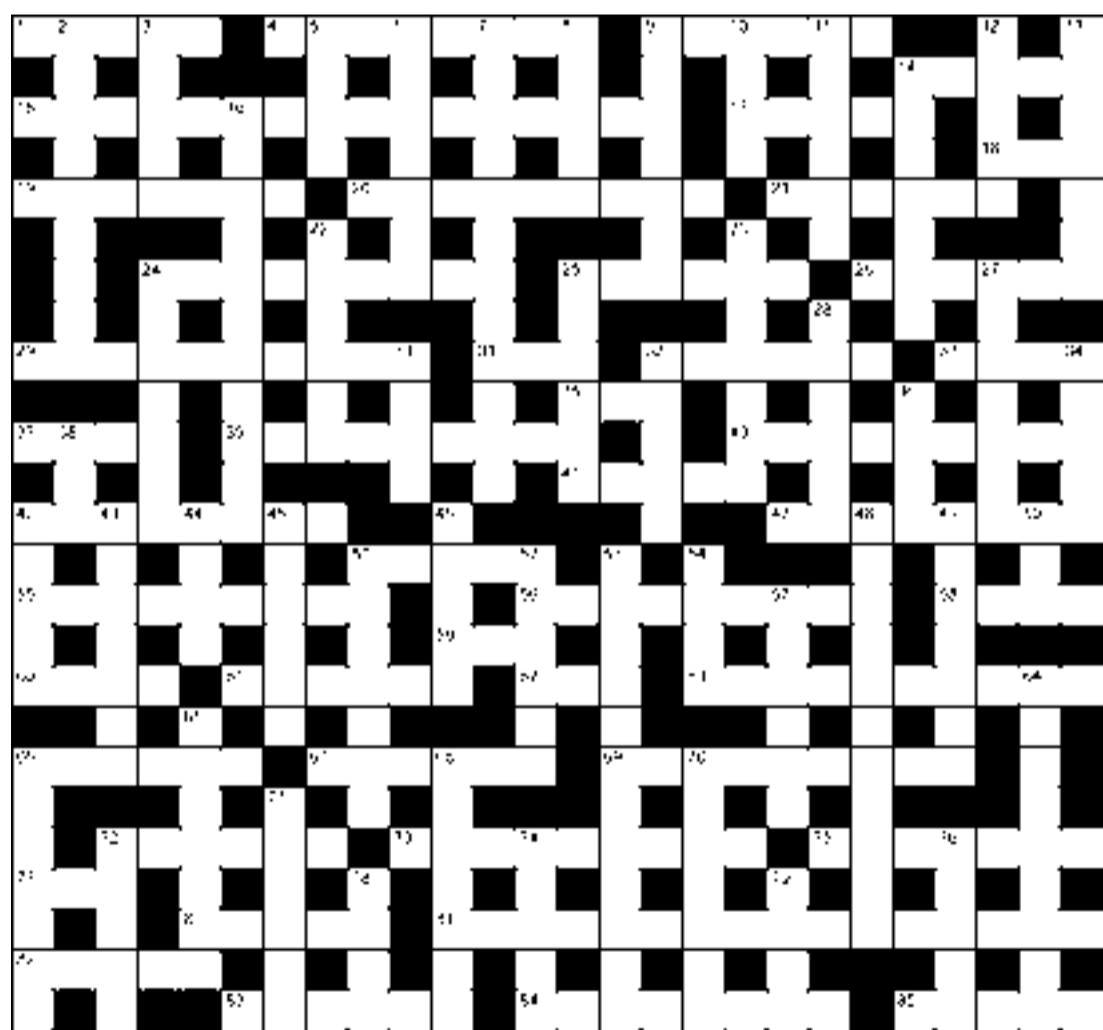
EASY

JUMBO CROSSWORD

253

ACROSS

- 1 Sufficient (5)
- 4 Ancient language of India (8)
- 9 Sea animal (6)
- 14 Deep humming sound (5)
- 15 Accuse (5,3,6,2)
- 17 Urbane (5)
- 18 Acquire (3)
- 19 Narrow connecting land (7)
- 20 Steel bird (anag)(9)
- 21 Private instructors (6)
- 24 Time of shortest day (9)
- 25 Soak up (6)
- 26 Farm enclosure (6)
- 29 Sorenness to touch (10)
- 31 Come first equal (3)
- 32 Mendicant (6)
- 33 Stun (4)
- 35 Zero (3)
- 37 Mountain in Sicily (4)
- 39 Furthest from the centre (9)
- 40 Space rock (9)
- 41 Japanese dish (5)
- 42 City in England (8)
- 47 Tip (8)
- 51 Fully grown (5)
- 55 Subjected to injustice (9)
- 56 Terrestrial burrower (9)
- 58 Instinctive motive (4)
- 59 Former measure of length for cloth (3)
- 60 Joint line (4)
- 61 Spanish city (6)
- 62 Garland of flowers
- 63 Irreverence (10)
- 66 Small (6)
- 67 Hidden shooter (6)
- 69 War instigator (9)
- 72 Relating to or using sight (6)
- 73 Charitable or helpful person (9)
- 75 Non-specific (7)
- 77 Female rabbit (3)
- 80 Wear away (5)
- 81 Manage without effort (4,2,4,6)
- 82 Not in any circumstances (5)
- 83 Twisted and turned (6)
- 84 Fantasy (8)
- 85 Discover (5)
- DOWN
- 2 Lunar surface (9)
- 3 Meal (5)
- 5 Skater's jump (4)
- 6 Small frying pan (7)
- 7 Enrolment (12)
- 8 Short (5)
- 9 Observer (7)
- 10 Final (4)
- 11 Planet (6)
- 12 Ballads (5)
- 13 Fate (7)
- 14 Down-payment (7)
- 16 Weapon of the gods (11)
- 23 Paper-folding art (7)
- 24 Referee (7)
- 25 Representatives (6)
- 27 African language (7)
- 28 Fried coating (6)
- 30 Indian garment (4)
- 32 Rapture (5)
- 34 Mournful poem (5)
- 36 Plant's anchor (4)
- 38 Pair (3)
- 42 Applauds (5)
- 43 Tramp (7)
- 44 Steel pin (4)
- 45 Expose (6)
- 46 Governed (5)
- 48 Lack of purpose (11)
- 49 Throne seizer (7)
- 50 Label (3)
- 51 Doting (7)
- 52 Money handler (6)
- 53 Readiness to become annoyed or angry (12)
- 54 Cast off (4)
- 57 Shellfish (6)
- 64 Naval officer (9)
- 65 Bunch (7)
- 66 Coming first (7)
- 68 Interwoven (7)
- 70 Sophisticated style (7)
- 71 Atoll lake (6)
- 72 Enthusiasm, spirit (5)
- 74 Enquired (5)
- 76 Eagle's nest (5)
- 78 Hard wood (4)
- 79 White cheese (4)



PREVIOUS SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1 Occur, 4 As quiet as a mouse, 14 Traps, 15 Split, 16 Substitute, 17 Femur, 19 Eel, 20 Nursery, 21 Cafeteria, 22 Traced, 25 Flustered, 27 Exalts, 28 Double, 33 Hoarseness, 35 Rob, 36 Thesis, 37 Tile, 39 Ape, 41 Circuit, 42 Viewer, 43 Carpenter, 44 Girth, 45 Employee, 50 No, 51 Trembled, 55 India, 58 Obtaining, 59 Thread, 60 Weighty, 61 Gnu, 63 Hoax, 64 Depose, 65 Row, 66 Fine tuning, 68 Calmly, 69 Weasel, 71 Catamaran, 76 Cycles, 77 Vestments, 79 Flatten, 81 Sea, 84 Eerie, 85 Inoculated, 86 Cubes, 87 Lurid, 88 Fond of the bottle, 89 Aside.

DOWN: 2 Cyrus, 3 Units, 5 Soup, 6 Upstage, 7 Exiled, 8 Abuse, 9 America, 10 Oafs, 11 Sombre, 12 Dazed, 13 Isolate, 14 Tractor, 18 Prosperity, 23 Lever, 24 Stretch, 26 Lyrical, 27 Embargo, 29 Bristol, 30 Sodium, 31 Crawl, 32 Mirror, 34 Slit, 36 Tears, 38 Erred, 40 Germ, 45 Epoch, 46 Pitfall, 47 Omit, 48 Edited, 49 Adage, 50 Natural, 52 Eventually, 53 Begonia, 54

SPORTS

Email your sports news, reports and photos to editor@valleyprofile.co.nz

Danielle finds joy on the track and the trail

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

It's no secret Danielle Aitchison loves to run fast.

The 24-year-old para-athlete from Patetonga made that clear at the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships where she snapped up not one but two gold medals for the Women's 100m T36 final and the Women's 200m T36 final. It wasn't until Danielle noticed there was no sight of her main competitor, she thought she might have a chance at gold, Danielle told *The Profile*. Her time for the 100m race was 13.43 seconds - just 0.02s from her own personal best (PB).

"It was a really big atmosphere and I really enjoyed it, but I didn't quite get the time that I wanted. I was so close to my PB," she said.

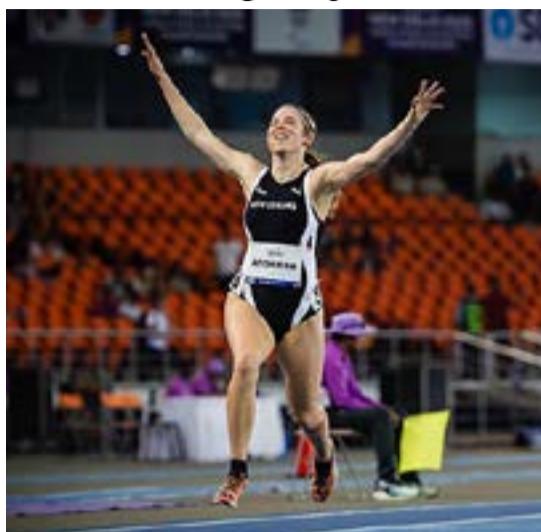
In the 200m final, Danielle said she applied a bit of pressure on herself with a goal to complete it in 27.20s.

But the young athlete smashed it out of the park with an even faster time, and smashed her own previous world record of 27.47s.

"I was really surprised when I looked up and I saw the time of 27.18s. It was incredible to achieve such a massive PB and to also do it in an environment where it was essentially felt like a time trial because I didn't see any of my competitors around me," she said.

"I wasn't sure how close or far behind they were. All I was just trying to do was just try and run my own race and see what time I could produce."

Her gold medal for the 200m



Two gold medals for Danielle Aitchison at the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships.

T36 final marks her third consecutive world title in the event - a 'three-peat' achievement. "It just really solidifies my training that I've done and it just shows that I'm on the right track," she said.

Her ultimate goal is to win a gold medal in the Los Angeles Paralympic Games. "And so that's really what I'm aiming for and pushing for and training really hard for."

Every competition was a "chance to prove myself", she said, and see where she was going with her training. "It's just a really nice feeling to know that you're on track and that all the training, all the sacrifice and all the hard work is, it's all going towards something," she said.

But to walk away with two gold medals was incredible, she said,



Photos: MICHAEL THOMAS

mountains.

"I feel like I'd worked so hard the last four years to lead up to the Paralympic Games. It was such a hard couple of years. And then I didn't quite get the accomplishment that I wanted at the Paralympic Games that it did really affect me mentally."

Danielle said she was so rigid and strict around everything she did and needed to be to fulfil the athletic goal she had in her mind. "From eating the right food, sleeping enough hours and doing all my recovery skills. And so obviously all of those take time, which then meant sacrifice of doing other things and hanging out with my family, hanging out with friends," she said.

"So it was a very, very focused

time on being the perfect athlete that I thought I needed to be."

But the driven athlete was determined to make space to rest, relax and spend time with friends and family.

"I've really had more balance this year than I have over the last three years in my life. I think going forward, I want to continue to try and find that balance because it's not always easy," she said.

"Sometimes I do go back to my old habits. I'm like, I know I need to get this many hours of sleep. I need to go for my walk. I need to recover. I need to eat the right food. But then I need to keep reminding myself, no, Danielle, you can be an amazing athlete, but you can also have a life of your own and you can go see your family, you can eat chocolate, you can do the things that you really enjoy doing. And you can enjoy training," she said. "I'm going to try and really remind myself you can enjoy everything."

Danielle hopes to inspire others by "living it": enjoying her sport and enjoying what she does.

"I think I got into athletics because I love running and I love running fast. And I think sometimes it can be really hard because as an athlete, we are driven."

"Well, I'm driven to succeed and accomplish great things, but then it can take away from the enjoyment. And so I think [the] last year has been all about enjoying it," she said.

"I think that's what I really want to be my message to people is making sure that you enjoy it."

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