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Profile

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LUCKY ESCAPE

By TERESA MAXWELL and KELLEY TANTAU

Tairua homes were uninhabitable after a large slip broke water reservoir pipes overnight on January 22, emptying it's contents into the slip and damaging around 20 homes.

The slip was one of many during heavy rainfall in which parts of the region recorded around a month's worth of rain in just 12 hours, forcing Thames-Coromandel and Hauraki district councils to declare a state of emergency, which is set to remain in place until January 28.

A severe Metservice Red rain warning hammered Hauraki-Coromandel on January 21, causing widespread flooding, slips, road closures, and power outages, with several highways still closed and more than a dozen roads only open to residents and emergency services yesterday.

In Tairua, Thames-Coromandel District Council warned residents of Mount Paku on Friday that the slip had made the area a dangerous site.

"The water pipes to and from the nearby reservoir broke in the slip and emptied the contents of the reservoir into the slip. This has made the area a particularly wet site."

Resident John Drummond told RNZ he and his wife woke to people screaming around midnight.

He found his elderly neighbours needing help after they made it on to the deck of their home when the landslide took it out, sending the pair down around two metres into the mud.

The Drummonds helped them out and down their driveway to Fire and Emergency volunteers and an ambulance, and they were later taken to hospital by helicopter. The landslide had come down both sides of the property, pushing up

CONTINUED ON P2-3



A massive slip damaged many homes and created a "dangerous site" on Mount Paku in Tairua.
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CONTINUED FROM P1

against the back of the house. The back wall was pushed about two metres inside the house and the exterior wall of the house was bowing under the pressure.

Around 20 homes have reportedly been deemed uninhabitable, with either yellow or red-stickers, which indicates a building has sustained moderate to heavy damage or is at high risk from an external hazard, making it unsafe to occupy. Council said Geotech engineers were on site on January 24 to assess the slip and make a plan for clearing it and repairing the water pipes, and Motuhua Rd on Mt Paku was expected to be open to one lane at 6:30pm.

KUAOTUNU KAYAK RESCUE

Meanwhile, a woman and her daughter were rescued by kayak from the deck of their Kuaotunu home around 5:30am on January 21 after her home was surrounded by neck-deep, fast-flowing water that was still rising. The pair stayed at her father's home, however other residents - including her neighbours, sheltered at the Kuaotunu Hall after Civil Defence opened for those who needed to evacuate.

On January 26, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi said State Highway 25 at Kuaotunu West remained closed at the slip site until further notice, along with SH25 between Whangamatā and Whiritoa due to flooding and slips last week.

Council warned people against crossing or visiting the Kuaotunu slip site as it had the potential for more slippage.

The transport agency said on Friday the priority for its contractors was clearing slips to regain access in and out of Whangamatā via SH25 to Hikuai, and re-opening SH2 in the Karangahake Gorge between Paeroa and



The large slip at Kuaotunu over State Highway 25, which is still closed nearly a week after the storm.
Photo: TONY NEWTON

Waihi, which was reopened on January 23.

PM VISIT

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon landed in Thames on January 23 to meet Coromandel MP Scott Simpson and Thames-Coromandel district Mayor Peter Revell to see the scale of the storm's damage via Airforce helicopter.

Council said the visit was to illustrate the need for long-term roading resilience for the Coromandel.

Mr Simpson said the Prime Minister was briefed by council of the storm damage and "multiple ongoing issues" with slips, roading, water and sewerage issues.

MAYORAL RELIEF FUND

Mayor Peter Revell said visiting the affected sites around the peninsula was a "sobering experience" that prompted him to establish a Mayoral Disaster Relief Fund.



Coromandel MP Scott Simpson, left, with Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Thames-Coromandel district Mayor Peter Revell.

"Seeing the impacts... it made me aware that we need to do something to try and contribute to helping people get back on their feet," he said.

CONTINUED ON P3

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Thames Tides

Wed Jan 28	Thu Jan 29	Fri Jan 30	Sat Jan 31	Sun Feb 1	Mon Feb 2	Tue Feb 3
 Morning: 2:50am 3.2, 3:20pm 3.2 Afternoon: 9:05am 0.9, 9:35pm 0.7 Sun: 6:28am 8:33pm Best At: 8:32am 9:02pm Set: 12:55am, Rise: 4:19pm	 Morning: 3:56am 3.1, 4:21pm 3.2 Afternoon: 10:12am 0.9, 10:42pm 0.7 Sun: 6:29am 8:32pm Best At: 9:34am 10:06pm Set: 1:41am, Rise: 5:31pm	 Morning: 5:08am 3.2, 5:29pm 3.2 Afternoon: 11:21am 0.9, 11:51pm 0.6 Sun: 6:30am 8:31pm Best At: 10:38am 11:11pm Set: 2:41am, Rise: 6:36pm	 Morning: 6:16am 3.3, 12:25pm 0.8 Afternoon: 6:38pm 3.2 Sun: 6:32am 8:30pm Best At: 11:42am Set: 3:49am, Rise: 7:30pm	 Morning: 12:54am 0.5, 1:25pm 0.7 Afternoon: 7:17am 3.4, 7:43pm 3.3 Sun: 6:33am 8:30pm Best At: 12:13am 12:43pm Set: 5:03am, Rise: 8:14pm	 Morning: 1:51am 0.4, 2:20pm 0.6 Afternoon: 8:12am 3.5, 8:40pm 3.4 Sun: 6:34am 8:29pm Best At: 1:12am 1:39pm Set: 6:18am, Rise: 8:49pm	 Morning: 2:41am 0.3, 3:12pm 0.5 Afternoon: 9:03am 3.6, 9:31pm 3.5 Sun: 6:35am 8:28pm Best At: 2:05am 2:30pm Set: 7:31am, Rise: 9:18pm

MOON AND FISH KEYS

New Moon First Quarter Full Moon Last Quarter
 Good Fishing Fair Fishing Not So Good

TIME DIFFERENCES FOR OTHER PLACES

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

PLACE	Hr	MIN	HIGH	LOW
Coromandel	-0	05	-0	04
Whitianga	-0	01	-0	05
Tairua	+0	10	+0	20
Whangamata	-0	03	-0	06
Waihi Beach	-0	21	-0	16

Ohinemuri River peaks higher than in Gabrielle

CONTINUED FROM P2

The fund would enable home owners and small businesses affected by the storm to apply for financial assistance over the next six weeks, he said.

Council, government and a local business had already contributed to the fund and the Mayor was calling for more people to contribute.

WORSE THAN '23

Flood levels on the Ohinemuri River in Paeroa exceeded those recorded during Cyclone Gabrielle, with the river peaking at 17.9 metres during the severe weather event last week.

According to Waikato Regional Council, field staff monitoring the river on January 21 closed Paeroa's flood gates at the Criterion Bridge before 10pm. It reported that during Cyclone Gabrielle, which thrashed the region in 2023, damaging Kopu-Hikuai Rd, the Ohinemuri River at Karangahake reached 17.6m.

While last week's peak was only 0.3m higher, the difference in water flow was significant, council said, with the river carrying about 870 cubic metres per second compared with 731 cumecs during Gabrielle.

Also in Paeroa, the Maritime Park was badly flooded, with its lower buildings mostly submerged.

After a call for help, locals rallied to help clean up the flood-damaged park on Saturday.

"The heroes of the day, giving up their Saturday and reminding us that little towns have big hearts and a lot of them," the Park posted on Facebook.



Large slips near Whangamatā, above, and a flooded Maritime Park in Paeroa.



"Kudos to everyone that turned a state of emergency into a state of community spirit."

Over in Pauanui, Hauraki Gulf Weather reported Sheppard Ave saw 778mm of rain fall within 48 hours, from 6am on January 20, to 6am January 22.

Flooding also affected critical infrastructure across both districts, with wastewater pump stations inundated and overflowing in multiple locations.

Residents were warned to treat all surface water as contami-

nated and to stay out of flooded areas.

Water supplies were also at risk, and a water tanker was made available at Puriri to support the Thames Valley area.

SLIP WARNING

On January 22, council alerted residents to a partial landslide in Whitianga above the Taputapuatea Stream, about 200m from Alf Simpson Dr. Council said the landslide was unlikely to fall directly on to properties, and there was no immediate threat to life.



The Ohinemuri River went over the bridge, flooding the Gorge tunnel. THE AVIATOR

However, residents needed "to be aware of a potential risk of flooding, should the landslide subside any further and block the stream".

The heavy rain also prompted the Department of Conservation to close tracks to Mautohe Cathedral Cove until further notice due to intense rainfall causing damage and slumping on the popular track.

DOC campgrounds around the Coromandel Peninsula also remain closed for repairs.



The Paeroa floodgates. Photo: WRC

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3  1  2  1 

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dynasty.holtz@eves.co.nz



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2  1  1  1 

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lester.mullan@eves.co.nz



Waihi
6A Karamu Place

2  1  1  1 

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Set on a generous 1,277sqm section (more or less), this tidy near-new home offers comfort, and an elevated outlook in a highly sought-after subdivision. Call Brooke Edwards for more info.

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Waihi
10 Richmal Street

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Waihi
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5  2  2 

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Waihi
45A Martin Road

3  2  2  1 

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Well positioned close to Waihi township, this three-bedroom, two-bathroom home offers practical living with two separate living areas, and a recent renovation. An internal-access garage and an easy-care 679sqm (more or less) section.

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3  2  1 

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Doors stay open despite flooding

When heavy rain, high tides and flooding cut off access to parts of the Coromandel, Four Square Buffalo Beach owner-operator Mike Neilson was determined to keep his store open for the community.

Mike lives with his family around 20 minutes away in Matarangi. On the morning of last week's storm on January 21, he was at home when his team messaged to say conditions were worsening.

"I jumped in my Hyundai iMax van and tried to get through, but the road by Simpsons Beach was impassable because of the tide. I was within spitting distance of Whitianga but had to turn around and go home," he said.

With low tide at around 3.30pm, he tried again. He packed a bag and made it through to Whitianga.

Once at the store, he sent the team home and stayed on alone as the weather deteriorated.

With tourists in town and uncertainty about road access and power, customers continued coming in until early evening, many buying extra water and groceries in case conditions worsened overnight.

By 8pm, as the rain continued to pour, Mike closed the store and turned his attention to flood protection. He picked up sandbags from town and placed them around loading areas and the front entrance before beginning to restock what he could.

"The back of house was already knee-deep in water, so access to some stock was limited. At high tide just after 10pm, water was right up to the front of the store, and the back areas were flooded. My office is completely under water," he said.

Concerned about keeping the store trading for locals and visitors the next morn-



Mike Neilson, right, with duty manager Amber Brown and son Todd Neilson.

Photos: SUPPLIED

ing and with no way of getting home, Mike stayed overnight, tidying, completing admin tasks and preparing the store for opening at 5.30am to allow the building to dry out.

Road closures meant he was unable to get home, so instead went to a friend's house for a shower and an hour of sleep before heading back to the store to continue the clean-up and begin the insurance process.

He credited his team for acting quickly earlier in the day to protect stock by lifting it off the ground, and acknowledged sup-

port from nearby stores. As the recovery continues, Mike said being present when things got tough was part of the responsibility of being a local store owner.

"You're part of a community, whether it's regular locals or visitors who don't know the area. As an owner-operator, you don't just own the business, you're responsible for how it shows up for people when they need it," he said.

Despite being flooded, he said the Coromandel was a special place to live and work and a few days of bad weather each year was "completely worth it".

In photos: Flooding across Hauraki-Coromandel



Mercury Bay Marlins rugby team members and volunteers help fill sandbags.



Gilmour Reserve in Waihi is closed until further notice due to flood damage.



Clearing a slip at Anzac Bay, near Waihi Beach.

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AIM HIGH, REACH FOR THE SKY

Tirohia School Celebrates Strong ERO Progress and the Power of Small-School Learning

Tirohia School is celebrating a glowing progress update from the Education Review Office (ERO), following their Term 3 2025 visit. The review acknowledges the significant and sustained improvement happening across the school, highlighting strong teaching, increasing student achievement, and a learning environment where every child is genuinely known, valued and supported.

ERO verified that Tirohia School has made clear progress in addressing all improvement priorities set out in its previous report. A structured and evidence-based approach to teaching – particularly in writing and mathematics – has accelerated learning for many students. The majority of learners are now achieving at or above expected curriculum levels in reading and mathematics, with writing achievement also steadily strengthening.

As a small rural school, Tirohia School offers what many families are now seeking: small class sizes, personalised learning, and teachers who truly know their students. ERO noted the strong, respectful relationships between teachers and learners, with programmes designed around students' strengths, needs and interests. This individualised approach is a hallmark of small-school education and a point of pride for the Tirohia community.

Presiding Member Alison Imrie says the review affirms the commitment of staff and the value of a close-knit school environment.
"Our size is our superpower. Every child is seen, every child is supported, and every child matters here."

The report also acknowledges the school's well-embedded MANA values, consistent assessment practices, targeted supports for learners needing extra help, and improved systems for monitoring progress and attendance. ERO highlighted the school's dedication to ensuring students understand their learning goals and feel confident as active participants in their progress.

Tirohia School continues to strengthen attendance strategies and deepen partnerships with whānau to support engagement and wellbeing. With support from Ministry of Education specialists and wellbeing providers such as the Awhi Mai programme, the school is ensuring that students receive wrap-around support when needed.

As one of the small gems of Hauraki, Tirohia School offers high-quality teaching in a nurturing, family-focused environment – a place where children thrive both academically and socially. With small class sizes, strong values, dedicated teachers and a highly personalised approach, the school welcomes enquiries from families who want a place for their children to learn and grow.

AIM HIGH, REACH FOR THE SKY!

6332 SH26 RD3 Paeroa
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Pet Profile

Second chances for China at Thames SPCA

China, a beautiful nearly two-year-old dog, pictured sitting proudly with two dedicated Thames SPCA volunteers, is once again looking for her forever home.

China was originally adopted from Thames SPCA as a puppy, where she began her life surrounded by care, compassion, and hope.

Sadly, through no fault of her own, China has been returned to the shelter due to a change in her family's circumstances that meant they could no longer care for her.

While this transition has been confusing for her, China's loving nature continues to shine through.

Known for her affectionate personality, China adores cuddles and thrives on human companionship.

She also loves playing with other dogs and would suit a home where she can enjoy regular social time, whether with canine friends or an active family.

The team at Thames SPCA is committed to finding China a safe, loving home where she can once again feel secure and cherished.

Her story is a reminder that sometimes life changes unexpectedly – but with community support, dogs like China can be given the second chance they truly deserve.

- Supplied by Thames SPCA



China is affectionate, adores cuddles, and thrives on human companionship.
Photo: SUPPLIED

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Police take illegal ‘wash house’ home brew



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.

1926

Home brewing was known as a ‘Waihi industry’ as it was common knowledge that the brewing of beer had been extensively carried on there for years, and it was equally well known that much of it had been and still was being sold.

The police found it difficult to bring the offenders to book, and more than once their efforts failed.

Now, however, the premises of seven residents suspected of selling homebrew were raided, the haul totalling 700 bottles and hundreds of gallons in the process of being made.

The beer was termed ‘wash-house’ beer because it was generally made in the housewife’s copper. The bottled liquor was taken to the police station, where there was later quite an alarming of popping of corks.

Meanwhile, dancers thrashing themselves to death were blamed for small attendances at dance halls on the Hauraki Plains, especially at Kaihere.

Amusements there were so



The washhouse copper was used for home brewing of beer.

Photo: SUPPLIED

scarce that the young folk, in their hunt for recreation after their everyday drudgery, held too many dances until they got sick of them.

At one anticipated dance the custodian of the hall lit the lamps and went home. Not long afterwards the two musicians arrived, but as no one else turned up they scarpered as well. If young people were to be kept in the country districts they would have to be provided with more amusements.

At Waitakaruru, Mr Cameron, Plains County Inspector, and his wife had a very fortunate escape after a motorcar accident.

Mr Cameron, when nearing

the Maukoro Canal Bridge, had to pass a motor-coach that was standing near the side of the road. At about the same time there was a car approaching from the opposite direction, and Mr Cameron pulled to the side of the road to avoid a collision.

His car slid forward on the soft clay and into the canal. The car tipped over on to its hood, but the occupants were not injured.

If the tide had been in they might have been drowned, as at that point the canal was very deep and the current very fast.

The need for protecting the road at this spot had often been mentioned, and Mr Cameron’s was not the first car that had

gone into the canal there.

The car was dragged out and, except for the windscreen and hood, appeared little the worse for its dive into the mud.

Over at Paeroa, a new Sentinel steam rail-coach arrived allowing the *Auckland Star* to be delivered throughout the district before breakfast. The car also brought six passengers for Paeroa.

The new service promised to be a boon for the district. The Mayor of Paeroa, Mr Marshall, congratulated the Brett Publishing Company on its enterprise.

The service was greatly appreciated as it would allow residents to read the *Star* at breakfast every morning.

Chris’ Quiz

Weekly quiz by Chris Parminter

1. True or false: The inventor of the Dewey Decimal System, Melville Dewey, changed his name to Melvil Dui to make his name more efficient?
2. The element Neodymium (Symbol Nd) is used to make very strong a) bullet casings, b) chains, or c) magnets?
3. The musical instrument known as a glass harmonica, which had music composed for it by Mozart and was also used by Beethoven, was invented in 1761 by which US founding father? a) Alexander Hamilton, b) Benjamin Franklin or c) Charles Pinckney?
4. Pertaining to the annual growth rings on a tree trunk, when are the darker rings formed - winter or summer?
5. True or false: In New Zealand, the Victoria Cross medal can only be awarded after the recipient has died?
6. The South Island makes up what percentage of New Zealand’s total land area? a) 52.2 per cent, b) 56.2 per cent, or c) 58.2 per cent?
7. The US classified air base known as Area 51 is in which US State? a) California, b) Nevada, or c) New Mexico?
8. Badan Intelijen Negara or BIN is the state intelligence agency for which country? a) Iceland, b) Indonesia, or c) Iran?
9. What year did the email programme known as Gmail launch? a) 2004, b) 2008, or c) 2012?
10. What is the name of the toy pictured below, originally released in 1998?



ANSWERS: 1. True; 2. c) Magnets; 3. b) Benjamin Franklin; 4. Winter; 5. False; 6. b) 56.2 per cent; 7. b) Nevada; 8. b) Indonesia; 9. a) 2004; 10. Furby.

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On the Land

Animal welfare tech research wins award

Animal welfare is of paramount importance to New Zealand's dairy industry, with consumers increasingly interested in how food is produced, not just the quality of the final product, DairyNZ says.

International customers placed greater emphasis on sourcing products from sustainable and efficient farms, with animal welfare now recognised as a key pillar of sustainability, and understanding how cows interacted with their environment is pivotal, and increasingly, technology is helping with this, the organisation said.

DairyNZ scientist Dr Stacey Hendriks studied the behavioural and environmental needs of grazing dairy cows and reviewed technology-enabled indicators that applied particularly to New Zealand's pasture-based dairy cows.

Her research won her the prestigious TR Ellett Agricultural Research Trust Emerging Scientist Award at the 2025 International Precision Dairy Farming Conference held in Christchurch last month. Hosted by DairyNZ, it was the first time the event had been held in the Southern Hemisphere. It was attended by almost 400 farmers, researchers, advisors, and technology developers from 22 countries.

Dr Hendriks showcased the potential use of technology in monitoring animal welfare for grazing dairy cows, emphasising a shift from traditional, subjective measures to more objective, data-driven approaches.



Historically, animal welfare assessments in dairy farming have relied on animal-based indicators like body condition score and coat condition. However, "animal-based indicators are subjective, require trained assessors, and only provide a snapshot of an animal's experience at a given moment".

Additionally, many of other indicators have been developed for use on housed cows, making them less applicable to the unique needs of New Zealand's pasture-based grazing dairy cows.

Dr Hendriks and her research team identified animal-based welfare indicators specifically suited

for New Zealand's pasture-based dairy systems, and then categorised these based on feasibility, validity, and potential for wider uptake. "We found that technology can play a significant role in improving the scalability and real-time monitoring of animal welfare," she said.

The team found most practically feasible indicators related to health and nutrition while fewer options were available for assessing the physical environment and behavioural interactions - both human and animal interactions and cows' social behaviours.

The team identified seven in-

dicators related to the physical environment and five focused on behavioural interactions, which can now be measured using commercially available technologies.

Interpreting animal welfare based on individual behaviours, however, is complex.

"Lying behaviour, for example, can vary significantly. Both increases and decreases in lying time have been observed in cows experiencing clinical health issues or lying deprivation. This highlights that the relationship between behaviour and animal welfare is not always linear and is influenced by many factors," she said.

As a result, future research aims to explore more comprehensive approaches, such as combining multiple behaviours and other physiological and environmental data, to provide a more complete picture of a cow's lived experience.

Dr Hendriks sees a promising future for the integration of advanced analytics like machine learning into building a bespoke tool for pasture-based welfare assessment. By combining multiple data streams from behaviour to environmental conditions, researchers could develop composite models that offer a more nuanced understanding of animal welfare, she said.

"We believe technology-enabled indicators could provide real-time, scalable monitoring solutions for pasture-based welfare assessment," she said. "If technology can also alert farmers to potential welfare challenges, such as heat stress, it allows them to take proactive steps to mitigate the problem. This not only improves animal welfare but can also result in economic benefits, like reduced milk production losses."

By focusing on providing farmers with timely and relevant information, Dr Hendriks believes that technology can complement traditional stockmanship, empowering farmers to make informed decisions that improve both animal welfare and farm performance, while demonstrating the high standards of animal care on New Zealand dairy farms.

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On the Land

After the storm, the recovery continues

By TERESA MAXWELL

Emergency services and councils are working tirelessly to address ongoing issues and assess the damage within rural communities after last week's damaging storm, the Waikato Rural Support Trust says.

Thames-Coromandel and Hauraki district councils declared a State of Emergency last week after MetService issued a rare Red weather warning during a weather event that produced severe rain and flooding with potential to cause harm to people and property.

"Please take extra care, many roads remain closed, power is still out in some areas and conditions are slippery and unsafe in places," the trust said in a Facebook post. "While the worst may have passed, there is still work ahead. Stay safe, look out for one another and travel only if necessary."

Wild weather could affect rural communities in more ways than people often realised, the trust said. "From day-to-day farm management challenges and logistical headaches, to physical damage and long-term impacts. "It can also take a real toll on our wellbeing."

The Waikato Rural Adverse Events Group, made up of rural industry and emergency response partners, connected last week to assess the extent of the damage and identify any support needed for farmers and growers in the region.

"Whilst the red weather warning has

been lifted, there is going to be significant damage and clean up needed. Please proceed with caution and stay safe.

"If you have information that may be helpful, would like someone to talk to, or need help connecting with technical advice or support, please reach out.

"You're not on your own."

The trust recommended affected farmers review resources and guides from Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Neighbourhood Support New Zealand, DairyNZ and local district council websites and Facebook pages.

The trust said farmers should assess damage safely once flood waters recede.

Some tips included: avoiding using contaminated water for stock or irrigation; documenting all damage with photos or videos and notes before starting the clean up; contacting your insurer to check what's covered and next steps; keeping all receipts for cleanup, repairs and temporary housing; using protective gear during clean up to avoid exposure to contaminants; and disposing of spoiled feed or produce safely.

"It's normal to feel tired, worried, or overwhelmed as you work through the clean up and recovery. You don't have to face it alone, support is available."

DETAILS: For further info and support, contact Waikato Rural Support Trust, Ph 0800 787 254; or visit www.rural-support.org.nz; beeflambnz.com; www.neighbourhoodsupport.co.nz; or www.dairynz.co.nz.



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Walking the landscape: ECHO set to kick off

From sweeping coastlines to lush native bush, the landscape stretching from the Coromandel Peninsula to Te Puke offers some of the most diverse and rewarding walking experiences in Aotearoa.

This rich terrain - shaped by wind, sea and history - forms the backdrop to the ECHO Walking Festival, a celebration of walking, connection and storytelling led by knowledgeable local guides.

Running from March 20 to April 19, the ECHO Walking Festival invites walkers of all ages and abilities to explore this remarkable region.

With a programme of 44 guided walks, the festival ranges from short, gentle outings to full-day and overnight adventures, offering something for everyone.

ECHO Chair Vicki Lambert said the festival played an important role in connecting people to place.

"The ECHO Walking Festival is a wonderful way for locals to deepen their understanding of the landscapes they call home, while welcoming visitors to explore and learn about our region. Through walking and shared stories, people gain an appreciation of what makes this area so special."

Families and curious explorers are equally well catered for, with a dedicated ECHO Explorer kids programme designed to inspire tamariki through fun, hands-on outdoor experiences that encourage learning, curiosity and connection with nature.

History enthusiasts can explore the Maratoto Wires Track, following remnants of New Zealand's early telephone network through the Maratoto Valley, or step back into the gold-mining era on the Horse Whim and Komata Reefs Mine walk at Golden Cross. Meanwhile, the Otawhiwhi Cultural Walk at Bowentown offers a gentle, guided experience rich in Māori history



and storytelling.

A defining feature of the ECHO Walking Festival is its local guides, whose deep knowledge of ecology, history and conservation brings each walk to life.

Some walks also access private land, opened exclusively for the festival, offering truly unique experiences. Most walks are koha-based, making it easy for families and visitors to take part.

"Whether you're discovering a new track, seeing a familiar place through fresh eyes, or enjoying time outdoors with purpose, the ECHO Walking Festival offers an unforgettable way to experience the land - one step at a time."

DETAILS: For more information and to book a spot, head to: echowalkfest.org.nz.

Foodies

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Foodies: a place for culinary connoisseurs

Food has a quiet way of bringing people together. It's more than just nourishment – it's a shared experience that connects people.

This is what *The Valley Profile's* monthly Foodies feature is all about: a dedication to all things culinary in our community.

Whether you're on the hunt for the latest food trends, hidden gems, or local favourites, Foodies keeps our readership in the loop about the best dining experiences in the area.

Each month, a different Foodies advertiser has the opportunity to showcase who they are and what specialities make their establishment stand out.

But for many restaurants, cafes, pubs, food trucks and eateries there's more than just food on the menu.

Activities such as quiz nights, pool, karaoke, live music, community gatherings and more are key factors that draw people back again and again. Some food places also offer their venue for hire, catering for functions, cooking workshops, and even portable food or coffee carts for events.

With the summer season still in full swing - it's the perfect time for food businesses to stay front and centre with a spot on the Foodies page.

Get your culinary creations noticed by more food lovers through the Foodies page where locals go to find their next favourite spot.

DETAILS: To find out more and to join the Foodies page, call Davidda on 022 174 3988 or email: Davidda@valley-profile.co.nz



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New Year brings more changes to local media landscape

Since *The Valley Profile* launched nearly six years ago, there have been some huge challenges to overcome in the media industry, both locally and nationally.

In that time, we've seen community newspapers in this region sold, closed down, merged with neighbouring titles, or making changes to their distribution area.

This is all mainly due to huge increases in print costs, the Covid-19 pandemic impacting businesses resulting in a drop in advertising revenue, newsprint supply issues, and national media companies pulling out of the regions. Thankfully, advertisers and readers have continued to support *The Valley Profile* by sharing their stories and continuing to advertise, which is what funds our weekly local news.

Sadly, the New Year has brought more changes in our media landscape.

On January 12, Hauraki-Coromandel Post announced it's going fully digital, ending its printed edition and focusing entirely on its website.

This means *The Valley Profile* now covers the largest distribution area and prints the most copies each week in the Hauraki-Coromandel region.

However, also in January, *The Profile's* Public Interest Journalism funding expired and NZ On Air will not be continuing its national funding programme for community journalism.

So now more than ever, we rely on our advertising revenue to cover the costs of supplying local community news as it's our only source of funding to meet rising costs of printing, delivering and covering stories important to our region.

Despite the ongoing changes and chal-

lenges in our local media landscape, *The Profile* continues to publish every week.

Our small team continues to work hard to bring you your local paper and as a result, we continue to be strong, connecting local communities in each issue with award-winning journalism, advertorials and local advertising.

The Profile is locally owned and operated, employing three full-time staff, two part-time journalists, two part-time contractors and around 40 paper delivery people.

We currently print 16,000 copies, delivered each Tuesday to every letterbox in the Hauraki Plains, Paeroa, Waihi, Thames and Thames Coast, with bulk distribution to Whangamatā, Tairua, Pauanui, Whitiāngā and Coromandel town.

We also post our stories and digital editions on our website at www.valleyprofile.co.nz and our news app, The Coromandel App, which can be downloaded to smartphones from the App Store for Apple iPhones, or Google Play for android.

Though *The Valley Profile* has a strong online presence, our printed newspaper is our priority and main focus as we believe print to be the most effective means of delivering local news and advertising to our communities. So expect your *Profile* to be delivered in print for a long time to come.

I'd like to thank all those advertisers and readers who continue to support us through the ups and downs - we are dedicated to representing and informing our communities and it's you who make it possible.

DETAILS: To place an advertisement, advertorial or classified, call Nikki, Ph 022 130 3885, or Davidda, Ph 022 174 3988.

Teresa Maxwell, owner/editor

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The Choral (113 mins) M. Starring Ralph Fiennes. 1916. With war on the Western Front, a Yorkshire choral society has lost most of its men to the army. The choral's committee decides to recruit young males and a new chorus master to swell its ranks (despite their suspicions that the chorus master has something to hide). As conscription papers start to arrive, the community decides to make music together.

Nuremberg (148 mins) M. The Allies, led by an unyielding chief prosecutor, have the task of ensuring the Nazi regime answers for the unveiled horrors of the Holocaust while a US Army psychiatrist is locked in a dramatic psychological duel with former Reichsmarschall Herman Göring (Russell Crowe).

Marty Supreme (149 mins) R13. Starring Timothée Chalamet (*Golden Globe Award Male Actor Winner*). Marty Mauser, a young man with a dream no one respects, goes to hell and back in pursuit of greatness.

Anchor Me: The Don McGlashan Story (88 mins) E. Captivating documentary celebrating the extraordinary journey of Don's career. an uplifting tribute to a truly original talent.

Not Only Fred Dagg (103 mins) M. A comedian for 40+ years. John Clarke (aka Fred Dagg) traces his steadfast resistance to authority, his early career in NZ, and his four decades in the entertainment industry.

Hamnet (126 mins) M. From Academy Award® winning writer/director Chloé Zhao, HAMNET tells the powerful love story that inspired the creation of Shakespeare's timeless masterpiece, Hamlet. *Award winner.*

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.

Coming next week: Marama a Māori Gothic revenge horror set in Victorian England, 1859. *Wuthering Heights* - a passionate and tumultuous love story set against the backdrop of the Yorkshire moors (2026 film).

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Take a breath: the storm always breaks

OPINION



By MICHAEL WILKES

You know that moment when you're in the thick of it - tired, stretched, and wondering if it's ever going to end?

That was me the other night. Our little boy was vomiting on and off all night. Sleep was a rare gift. And in those moments, there's not a lot you can do but wait it out and hope for morning. But one thing we

did know, even in the fog of exhaustion - the sun would rise. This season would pass.

As I lay there in the dark, I remembered a beautiful little story.

There was once a bird who hated the storm. Every time the clouds rolled in and thunder cracked, she would cry to her mum, "Why does God take the sun away?"

Her mum would gently reply, "One day you'll understand".

And then, one day, as another storm rolled through, her mum said something different. She

said: "Fly into the storm. The answer's there".

So the little bird, nervous but curious, flew higher and higher through the rain and wind. Just as she was about to give up, she broke through the top of the clouds - and was hit by the warmth of the sun.

God never took the sun away. It had always been there - just hidden.

Maybe you're in the middle of a storm yourself right now. Maybe it's sickness, grief, stress, or just the slow ache of life not going to plan.

You can't see the sun. You can't feel the warmth. And you're tired of holding on.

But can I remind you - this season will pass.

And while you're in it, here's what I try to hold to: faith, hope, and love.

They're not flashy. They're not quick fixes. But they're the kind of anchors that hold strong when everything else is shaking.

You might not feel them right now, but they're still there - like the sun behind the clouds.

So don't give up.

Take a breath. Fly a little higher. And here's the practical bit - reach out for help. Talk to someone.

Because no matter how alone you feel, faith, hope, and love show up through people too.

The sun is still shining - even if you can't see it yet.

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 michael-wilkes.kiwi.

Gardening

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Prepare for the hottest month of the year

February is one of the hottest, driest months in the year and marks the tail end of summer. Your garden is likely bursting with life providing it has been getting the necessary irrigation.

It is an essential time to keep your garden thriving. This month is about keeping the harvest in top gear, also nipping pests in the bud, and controlling disease.

Keep planting late summer seedlings of lettuce and fresh herbs. If you are lucky enough to have a greenhouse you can continue planting tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers and peppers. This is the time to plan for next season crops.

February is a good time to plant seeds for autumn crops. Start with vegetables like carrots, beetroot, broccoli, spinach and lettuce. Also plant cabbage and kale because they will establish well as the weather cools.

Harvest vegetables as soon as they are ready to encourage successive crops

especially tomatoes, cucumbers and courgettes. A good watering plan can be a game changer to the length of time your vegetable crops continue. Watering generously every 4 days instead of short, shallow watering daily is advisable during dry weather. Water early morning or early evening.

Once crops finish remove the old plants and start preparing the soil for the winter crops which can be planted as soon as the weather starts to cool a little. In empty gardens replenish the soil and dig in blood and bone and sheep pellets.

Continue to harvest mid-season pip and stone fruit crops, blueberries, raspberries, grapes and plums. Picking fruits everyday will encourage late fruiting. Once nectarines, peaches and plums have finished fruiting, prune to shape and remove any dead or diseased branches.

Keep picking roses, dahlias, sweet pea, gladiolus, carnations, sunflowers just to

name a few to keep the plants flowering. It is such a colourful and bountiful time in the garden, a pleasure to behold. Dahlias are at their best. Hopefully they are all still standing with all the wind we have experienced.

They certainly put on a stunning display. You might like to add some general fertiliser to the garden just to keep plants looking and feeling good. The healthier the garden the less chance for pests.

Bulbs will start to appear in garden centres during the month, these are best planted once the soil cools. In warmer areas place bulbs in the fridge for 4 - 6 weeks before planting. Bulbs can be planted from

late February through to late autumn. Planting continuously through these months will ensure a continuous flowering season. Lovely to have that colour through the cooler months.

Prune summer flowering plants and tidy up perennials to encourage new growth. Give hedges a light prune only.

Summer can be very hard on the lawn if you are not able to water frequently. Use weed and feed which will provide essential nutrients to give the lawn a pick me up. Don't be tempted to cut the lawn too short.

Enjoy the garden
- Submitted by Ngatea Garden Circle



Bulbs start to appear in garden centres in February for planting in cooler months. Photo: PIXABAY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
February 2026						1
Moon Planting Calendar						Non planting Day
2 Full Moon	3 Non planting Day	4 Non planting Day	5 Non planting Day	6 Plant root crops, trees and shrubs	7 Plant root crops, trees and shrubs	8 Plant root crops, Liquid Feed
9 Plant root crops, Liquid Feed	10 Plant root crops, Liquid Feed	11 Non planting Day	12 Non planting Day	13 Plant root crops, trees and shrubs	14 Plant root crops, trees and shrubs	15 Plant root crops, trees and shrubs
16 Non planting Day	17 Non planting Day	18 New Moon	19 Plant above ground Crops, Liquid Feed	20 Non planting Day	21 Non planting Day	22 Non planting Day
23 Plant above ground crops	24 Plant above ground crops	25 Non planting Day	26 Non planting Day	27 Plant above ground Crops, Liquid Feed	28 Plant above ground Crops, Liquid Feed	Calendar Supplied by Gilmer Farms

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

HARD

235

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HARD

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

MEDIUM

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

EASY

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

JUMBO CROSSWORD

255

- ACROSS**

1 Matching set of furniture (5)

4 Attack imaginary enemies or evils (4,2,9)

14 Empty (5)

15 Imitate (5)

16 Absurd (10)

17 Spear (5)

19 Pixie (3)

20 Viewpoint (7)

21 Alternative route due to road closure (9)

22 Begrudged (6)

25 Platform for musicians (9)

27 Longing (6)

28 Sell door to door (6)

33 Expressed as a recipe (10)

35 Entirely (3)

36 Warfare (6)

37 Eager (4)

39 Age (3)

41 Catching up (7)

42 Sanctuary (6)

43 Nominee (9)

44 Combine (5)

45 Maximum (8)

50 Egyptian sun god (2)

51 Lacking due decency (8)

55 Backbone (5)

58 Flat case for drawings (9)

59 Nuclear (6)

60 Rider's footrest (7)

61 Slippery fish (3)

63 Deduct from wages (4)

64 Completely lacking (6)

65 Annoy (3)

66 Non-vowels (10)

68 Playground plank (6)

69 Threefold (6)

71 Colleague (9)

76 Contributing element (6)

77 Bearable (9)

79 Motorcycle bag (7)

81 Imminent (3)

84 Dance club (5)

85 Not clear or sharply defined (10)

86 Stale-smelling (5)

87 Uncanny (5)

88 Holiday postcard message (4,3,4,4)

89 Crooked (5)

DOWN

2 Without equal or like (6)

3 Warble (5)

5 Flower (4)

6 Instruction, coaching (7)

7 Artificial hairpiece (6)

8 Metal shackles (5)

9 Tyrants (7)

10 Doing nothing (4)

11 Interior coating (6)

12 Lost colour (5)

13 Head cold (7)

14 Invented (7)

18 Expression of sympathy (10)

23 Declare (5)

24 Pull a face (7)

26 Pungent gas (7)

27 Quandary (7)

29 Stray from normal (7)

30 Empty, boastful talk (3,3)

31 Building dividers (5)

32 Large wine bottle (6)

34 Twilight (4)

36 Transport (5)

38 Resided (5)

40 Floor covering (4)

45 Stared in astonishment (5)

46 Head pain (7)

47 Bean curd (4)

48 Retailer (6)

49 Dismissed (5)

50 See (7)

52 Systematic (10)

53 Hibernating (7)

54 Daring manoeuvres (6)

55 Temporary stay (7)

56 Set of accounts (5)

57 Rustproof metal (4)

62 Amalgamation (5)

67 Striped identifier on stock (3,4)

68 Examined (7)

70 Condition in contract (7)

72 Egocentric (7)

73 Miniaturised tree (6)

74 Mooring cable (6)

75 Shelled insect (6)

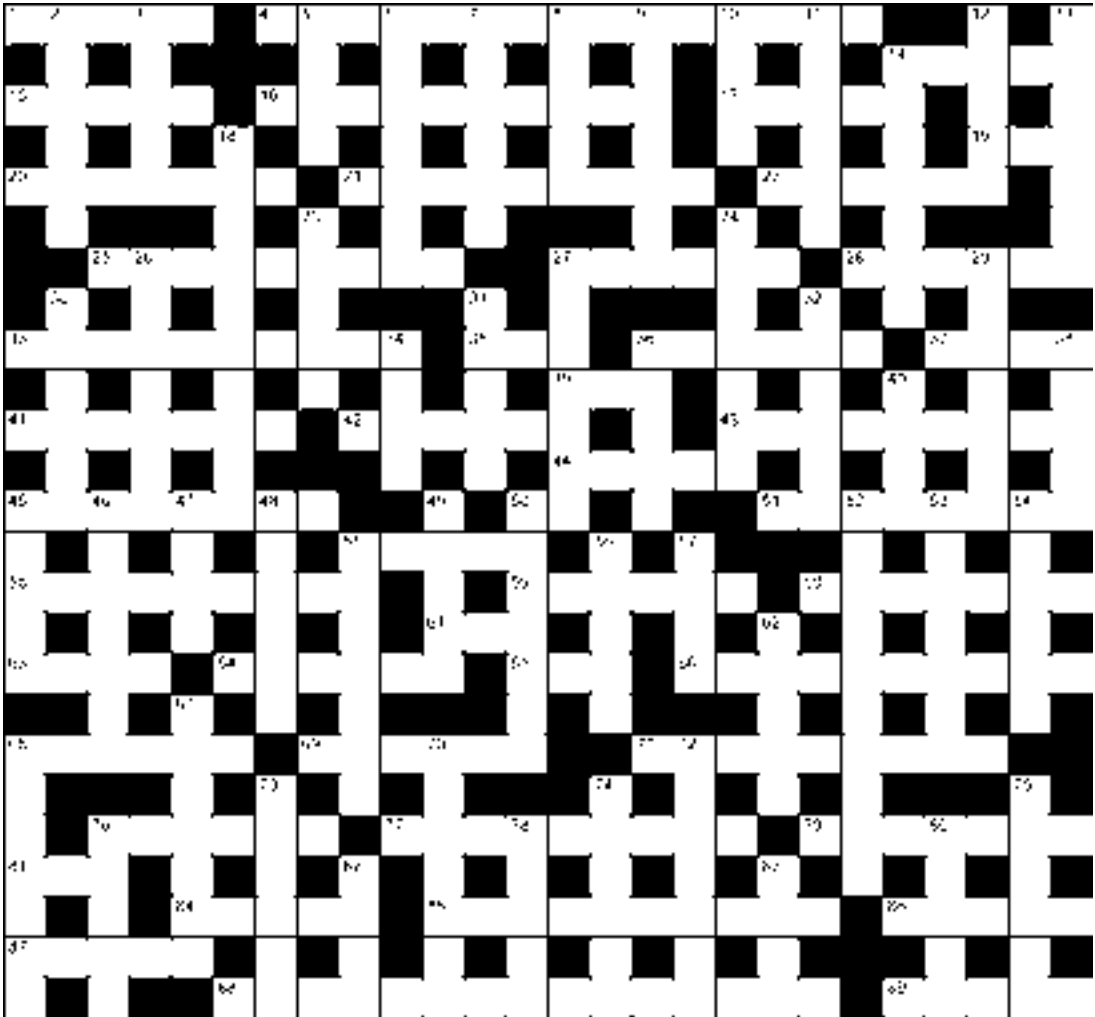
76 Passenger boat (5)

78 Bestow (5)

80 Naming words (5)

82 Night flier (4)

83 Wound mark (4)



PREVIOUS SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1 Abyss, 4 One of the family, 11 Inlet, 14 Troll, 15 Susceptible, 16 Scotland, 19 Headway, 20 Manse, 21 Investing, 24 Backwards, 26 Trivia, 27 Vigour, 31 Ennui, 32 Diatribe, 34 Permanence, 38 Derided, 39 Signal, 40 Cleans, 41 Wart, 42 Hanging, 45 Assessment, 50 Starter, 54 Loud, 55 Ripple, 56 Ranges, 57 Seaweed, 60 Deep-seated, 61 Polished, 62 Forge, 65 Clutch, 66 Strips, 67 Milkshake, 72 Corrected, 73 Circa, 74 Varnish, 79 Elevated, 80 Compromised, 81 Freed, 82 Laugh, 83 Second thoughts, 84 Sense.

DOWN: 2 Barber, 3 Salad, 5 Nous, 6 Orchard, 7 Typist, 8 Evil, 9 Atlantic, 10 Yachts, 11 Intentions, 12 Lead, 13 Toddler, 17 Tacky, 18 Retirement, 22 Basic, 23 Downcast, 25 Amusing, 26 Trellis, 28 Angela, 29 Fiancé, 30 Amends, 33 Trips, 35 Enter, 36 Fern, 37 Acne, 42 Holed, 43 Nauseous, 44 Guitar, 45 Apprentice, 46 Stew, 47 Scrapes, 48 Mangle, 49 Needs, 51 Tier, 52 Rowlock, 53 Emerge, 58 Psychopath, 59 Gecko, 63 Time-worn, 64 Wheat, 65 Conceal, 68 Itching, 69 Creeps, 70 Gigolo, 71 Assess, 75 Nerve, 76 Menu, 77 Spit, 78 Kept.

Next phase set to begin for memorial

By KELLEY TANTAU

With the Sir Keith Park Memorial at Thames Airfield now complete, attention is turning toward the future, with further projects planned to preserve the legacy of one of the country’s most distinguished military leaders.

According to Sir Keith Park Memorial Airfield president Geoff Furkert, planning was already underway for a new addition to the site: a complementary memorial honouring New Zealand airmen recognised as being among “The Few” - those who served during the Battle of Britain between July 10 and October 31, 1940.

Supported by Chris Fraser of Peninsula Memorials, the concept design featured three black granite tablets arranged beneath the Hurricane fighter aircraft and behind the statue of Sir Keith Park, enhancing the overall “aura” of the memorial, Geoff said.

The goal is for the new tablets to be unveiled during the Thames Battle of Britain commemorations in September this year, with research currently ongoing to finalise the list of names to be engraved on the tablets.

Depending on the source, Geoff said, estimates ranged from 127 to 145 New Zealand



Early concept visualisation showing three ‘The Few’ airmen black granite memorial under the Hurricane replica.

Image: SUPPLIED

airmen, with recent recognitions including then-Air Vice Marshal Sir Keith Park himself, and Flight Lieutenant Reginald D’Arcy Jury.

Alongside physical memorial developments, work has also started on two children’s books relating to, or featuring, Sir Keith Park.

One book will be aimed at

primary school students, and the other at secondary school students, with Michelle Mulholland and Sally Muir playing key roles in delivering the educational initiative.

And while the 2.3m bronze statue of Sir Keith, designed by Helensville artist Joanne Sullivan, now stands proudly and the memorial has been re-

alised, financial commitments still remained.

Geoff said around \$16,000 was still required to meet outstanding obligations, which must be settled by March 31.

“Further funds will be required going into the future for maintenance, insurance, and security - as well as for new initiatives to keep spreading the

word about Sir Keith’s auspicious legacy; an inspiration to all young New Zealanders,” he said.

DETAILS: Thames’ annual Battle of Britain Commemorations are scheduled to kick off from 11am on Sunday, September 13 at the airfield. To donate to the ongoing projects, contact Geoff at geoff.furkert@xtra.co.nz.



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Vern Harding of Scrappy Verns.

File photo: KELLEY TANTAU

Scrap metal master looks after regions

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

‘Getting everyone together’: Karangahake movie nights

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

It’s almost time to crack out the snacks, drinks, a comfy chair or bean bag and head to the Karangahake Hall. That’s because once a month, the Karangahake Hall committee will host a movie night at 6pm with a kids movie, and then at 8pm with a movie for the adults. The first movie night kicked off last Friday with *Babe* and then *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Committee secretary Aura Hurrell told *The Profile* they got a projector last year and hosted a few movie nights. “So I was like, okay, I’ll just keep doing it until people stop coming.” With movie nights set to run each

month throughout 2026, people have the opportunity to pencil in the dates and plan ahead, with the next event kicking off on February 13. “We’ve just got the projector and a screen. So I just pop that up and we’ve got a couple of couches there and I put up a few tables and chairs. But people bring bean bags or camp chairs and little snacks,” Aura said. “There’s a microwave there and an oven if people want to heat up microwave popcorn. But people turn up with pizza and fish and chips and stuff.” The Karangahake Hall Facebook page is the best spot for people to stay up to date and find out when the movie nights are on. “I put the posts up there each month.

I put the main one up and then each month, once I actually know what movies I’ve got to play, I’ll put one up kind of like the week before,” she said. “People can just bring their koha. And if they don’t have it, that’s fine too, you know, if they can’t afford it, it’s just about getting people out and getting everyone together. “It all just goes towards the running and maintenance of the hall, so every little bit helps,” she said. “It’s just real casual. Just bring your stuff and come along, and I’ll put the movie on.” **DETAILS: Follow Karangahake Hall on Facebook and keep up to date with the list of movie nights. Don’t forget to take a koha for entry, snacks and comfy seating.**



Movie nights have begun at Karangahake Hall.

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Purpose of meeting: Approval of Draft Constitution.
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Period of closure: Sunday 15 March 2026, 9.00am to 6.00pm.
Road to be closed: Pukewera Road, Waihi (RP 1.030 – 4.320)
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Any objections should be directed to Transport Manager on 07 862 8609 or info@hauraki-dc.govt.nz by 14 February 2026
D A Speirs
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Hauraki District Council

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Artists hope to ‘make people smile’

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

February is shaping up to be a month of whimsy and wonder at the Thames Art Gallery.

That’s because there will be an exhibition of works by not one but two featured artists, who both have a flare for thinking outside the box.

Nicky Ball is set to make her art exhibition debut with pottery pieces made in her shed at home in Hikuai.

“[I’ve] been potting for about two years. I don’t do the wheel, but I do everything else... [I] love hand building, making press molds and slip casting. I’ve got my own kilns and things and I make my mess out there,” Nicky told *The Profile*.

Slip cast is the process of pouring liquid clay into a mold, while press moulding is where clay is physically pressed into the mold.

“I’ve made my own pieces and then I’ve made a mold of my pieces. So I completely design the pieces myself, but I can repeat them.”

People were likely to find her work to be quirky, she said - the sort of art that people would either like or think it’s really ugly.

“I do a lot of faces and I’m getting into my totems made of all the faces that I create and then I tattoo the faces.

“I love garden theme work and would say I’m quite quirky but hopefully it makes people smile.”

Meanwhile, the paintings of Gary Nevin will also be on show at the gal-

lery.

The creator originally from Paeroa, who now lives in Whenuakite where he built an Earth House known as Artists House, told *The Profile* “I want my work [to] make people smile and feel good”.

From digging blue clay out of the Ohinemuri river in Paeroa, to becoming a full-time clay worker in the late 80s after his son was born: “I’ve been making art for as long as I can remember”, he said.

“The pieces were usually whimsical figures and animals, with a nod to the classical vessels in all shapes and sizes.”

The artist said painting was always “his first love” after music, kumara and women.

“So for the last few months I’ve been working on a series of portraits, still life of the very organic and well rounded kumara, with a very feminine feel to them - which make up the bulk of the exhibition,” he said.

The painter said he felt like he had “some success” after he discovered oil and acrylic sticks and used them for the first time on his portraits.

One “point of difference” was when he finished off one of the portraits by scratching through the oil stick - it was a “unique look”, he said.

“Please come along to the Thames Society of Arts, Tararu and enjoy throughout all of February, 2026.”

DETAILS: Thames Art Gallery, 604 Tararu Rd, Thames, open daily from 10am to 4pm.



Gary Nevin and Nicky Ball hope to bring smiles to people’s faces as the February featured artists at Thames Art Gallery. BELOW: Some of their works. Photos: SUPPLIED





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Mangatangi 410b Mangatangi Road

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karl.davis@bayleys.co.nz
Connor Davis 027 496 4622
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bayleys.co.nz/2630180

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Paeroa strikes gold, bronze at Colgate Games

ATHLETICS

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

It certainly wasn't a slow start to the year for the Paeroa Amateur Athletics Club, which took 22 athletes to compete at the North Island Colgate Games on January 9-11 at Tauranga Domain.

But the young athletes didn't just compete, a few of them also swept up medals.

Eleven-year-old Liam Rawnsley entered the grade 11 long jump event and told *The Profile* he set a goal of 4.80m before the competition, but "I never expected to jump more than that".

However, his best jump was the first of three at 4.81m which secured him a gold medal.

Liam said he was "so relieved" when his Dad showed him the final results showing "I'd won."

The young athlete also snapped up a bronze medal for the high jump event. "I couldn't believe it when I cleared 1.45m in the high jump, I've never made that height before, so I was really surprised," he said.

"We had a really big team from Paeroa this year so it was heaps of fun hanging out with everyone and cheering each other on."

The best part about athletics, according to Liam, was setting new personal bests and getting fitter.

"I make heaps of friends from all over the place and everyone is really nice and encouraging."

Meanwhile, Kahn Reddish also snapped up a bronze medal for his shotput achievement of 9.49m.



Paeroa Amateur Athletic Club makes a mark at the 2026 North Island Colgate Games. RIGHT: The Grade 9 mixed relay team.

Photos: SUPPLIED



Grade 14 boys relay team, left, Olympic high jump gold medalist Hamish Kerr with Kahn, Jordan and Liam.



Wilson Slavic in the 200m.

Kahn said he had worked on getting a medal at the Colgate Games for three years so was happy all his training "finally paid off".

Even though he was glad he also achieved fourth place in the discus event with a distance of 26.77m, he said he was disappointed his first throw accidentally wasn't measured. There were a few goals the athlete wanted to reach in the future. "I'd like to medal again next

year at Colgate and reach recorded throws of over 30metres in discus and over 10 metres in shot put."

For the first time in around 30 years, Paeroa was able to put forward a grade 14 4x100m relay team, club spokesperson Sarah Rawnsley said. The team, made up of James Rawnsley, Kian Rangihika, Wilson Slavic and Conner Huitema, qualified second in their heat and came 7th in the final.

Club president David Rawnsley said the club struggled to retain athletes as they reached college age. "To have two new boys join the club this season meant we had enough for a relay team."

"As it was the last event, on the final day of competition, we were all immensely proud to see our team perform and represent the club so well in front of a packed stadium."



James Rawnsley in the relay.





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