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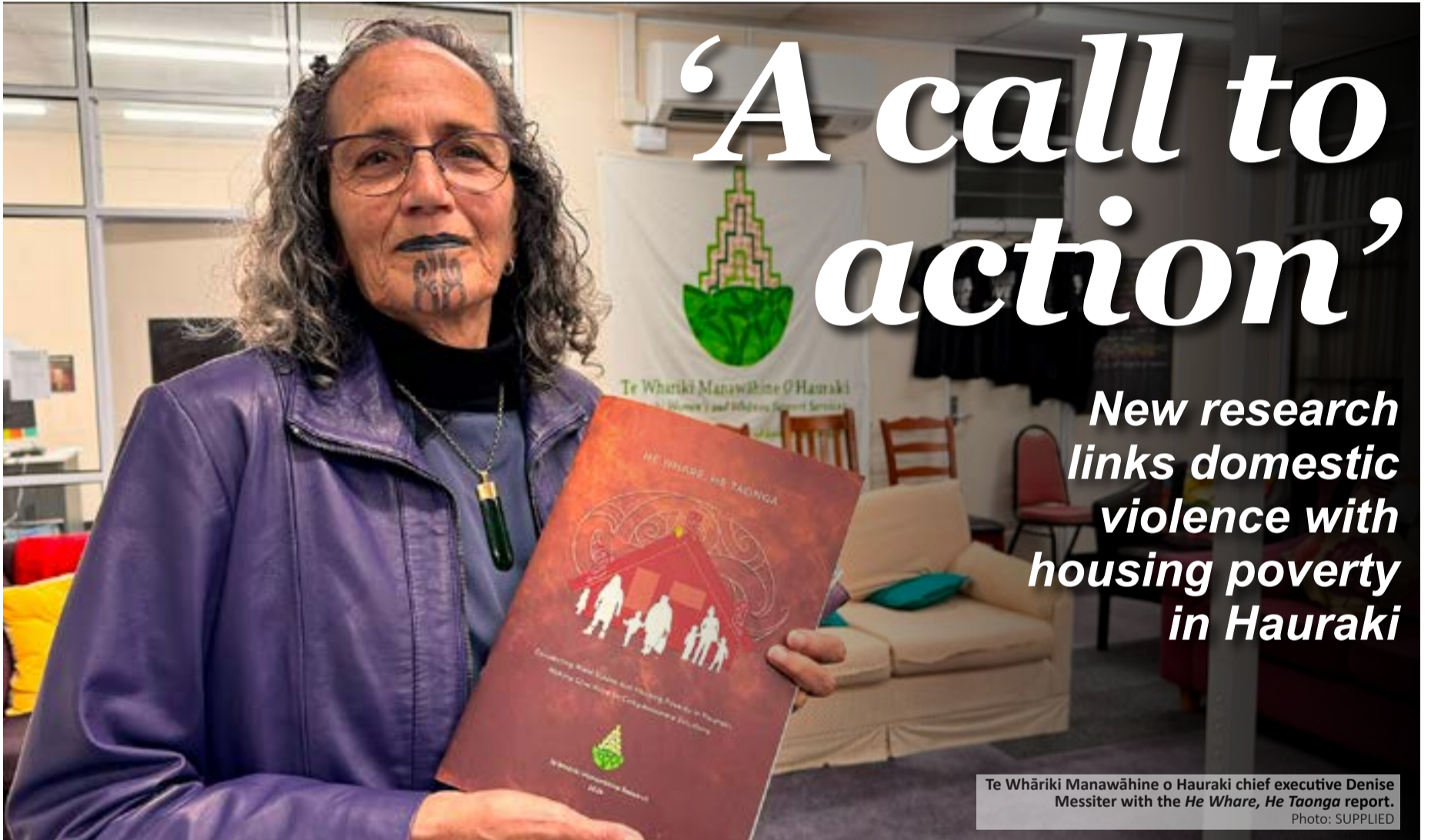
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# 'A call to action'

**New research links domestic violence with housing poverty in Hauraki**

Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki chief executive Denise Messiter with the *He Whare, He Taonga* report. Photo: SUPPLIED

By TERESA RAMSEY

Hauraki women have shared harrowing stories of domestic violence and housing poverty in new research released by Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki - Hauraki Women's Refuge last week.

The 68-page *He Whare, He Taonga* report launched in Thames on July 31 was based on interviews with 23 women, including 15 from Hauraki Women's Refuge client base, seven of which were housed in

emergency housing or a refuge safehouse.

In the report, the women shared their stories of domestic violence, sleeping in cars with multiple children and "societal violence", where their interactions with state representatives made them vulnerable and fearful.

"They fear their tamariki being uplifted... they're better off being invisible than seen," the report said, "this system creates harm", and "our wāhine carry the burden of risk

for failed successive government policies over many years".

Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki chief executive Denise Messiter said the research demonstrated a connection between mahi tūkino (family violence and sexual violence), housing poverty and unmet housing needs.

Funded by the National Science Challenges at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the report was

an "undeniable call to action" for those in positions of power, policy and planning to prioritise impacted wāhine given the multiple obstacles they faced to find shelter, researchers said.

"This compelling evidence shows this clear linkage, how it impacts whānau and what we collectively need to do about it," Denise Messiter said.

"Over the last three decades we've gone

CONTINUED ON P2

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# Domestic violence linked with housing poverty

CONTINUED FROM P1

from having public housing available to now living in an era where there is no housing available at all, which is an untenable situation for our people and future generations of mokopuna yet unborn.”

The report also discusses the significance of addressing systemic inequality in housing, prioritising affordable housing, understanding tribal boundaries, and appreciating the importance of education, stewardship, and the need to change mindsets to support Māori land ownership.

The women told researchers their stories of domestic violence and housing poverty, which increased during the Covid-19 pandemic and Cyclone Gabrielle.

“He broke into the house. He broke the windows, the phones, and my toe. He tried to make me lose the baby by punching me in the stomach, then we ended up being taken to the hospital,” one woman said.

“The police were involved and then didn’t allow me and my daughter to go home... Then I was given notice to move and the due date for me to move out was when I was due to have baby. I couldn’t find anywhere to live. It was near impossible. So, I stuck all of my stuff into my girlfriend’s shed and lived in a garage.”

There were also stories of overcrowding and substandard living conditions.

“I was living with family; the house was overcrowded,” one woman told researchers.

“Me and my children were living in a living room. It was cold. It was damp and full of mould. My 2-year-old was constantly getting sick. We were in and out of hospital. It



Research manager Paora Moyle at the launch.

was that bad we almost lost him once.”

A shortage of houses throughout Hauraki-Coromandel districts coupled with high demand meant it was difficult for the women to find a home to rent, the report said.

“I have applied for what feels like 40 plus houses since I’ve been here [in Refuge]. I’ve been to roughly 20 house viewings,” a woman said. “The other 20 houses I applied for, we didn’t make the short list. When I go to the viewings there’s like 30+ other people there so we’re all dying to get into this one home... They hear that I’m in great credit and I don’t have a criminal record. I always pay on time, clean and tidy but as soon as they hear I’m apparently a current MSD client, living in Women’s Refuge, that’s it. I don’t hear back from them.”

The report said 46 per cent of Hauraki housing stock were holiday homes in the Thames-Coromandel District Council area,

which were unavailable for rentals.

“Then you’ve got old housing stock and cold, damp and really poor houses... You know there’s considerable vulnerability around housing in Hauraki when a real estate agent says to woman who has water seeping down the walls, and brown tap water, ‘oh well, like it or lump it, get out if you don’t want it’, the report said.

The research showed women were also often held accountable and financially burdened for damages to a house caused by their partner or ex-partner, and some women and their children were also abruptly evicted from Kāinga Ora properties.

This meant wāhine often had to accept housing options that increased their risk of experiencing violence or were out of their home area, the report said.

Researchers said the findings for a local problem offered national lessons for the housing sector to take heed of.

Research manager Paora Moyle said the project “intentionally illuminates the voices of wāhine Māori, enabling them to be key contributors towards housing solutions in Hauraki”.

“It is from this standpoint that we come to understand societal violence, whānau violence, and related persistent housing poverty experienced by Hauraki wāhine Māori and their whānau,” she said.

Paora and the researchers have just been approved by the Health Research Council to do similar research with gang whānau.

**DETAILS: Find the full report at [auraki.refuge.co.nz/he-whare-he-taonga](http://auraki.refuge.co.nz/he-whare-he-taonga). Women’s Refuge is available 24 hours a day: Ph 0800 733 843.**



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## Thames Tides

Wed Aug 7	Thu Aug 8	Fri Aug 9	Sat Aug 10	Sun Aug 11	Mon Aug 12	Tue Aug 13
 Morning: 2:47am 0.7, 2:57pm 0.6 Afternoon: 9:06am 3.2, 9:18pm 3.3 Sunrise: 7:11am, Sunset: 5:37pm Best At: 2:19pm Rise: 8:39am, Set: 8:10pm	 Morning: 3:27am 0.7, 3:35pm 0.6 Afternoon: 9:44am 3.2, 9:56pm 3.3 Sunrise: 7:10am, Sunset: 5:38pm Best At: 2:59pm Rise: 9:01am, Set: 9:08pm	 Morning: 4:05am 0.7, 4:13pm 0.7 Afternoon: 10:22am 3.2, 10:35pm 3.2 Sunrise: 7:09am, Sunset: 5:39pm Best At: 3:37pm Rise: 9:22am, Set: 10:05pm	 Morning: 4:43am 0.7, 4:53pm 0.8 Afternoon: 10:59am 3.2, 11:14pm 3.2 Sunrise: 7:07am, Sunset: 5:40pm Best At: 4:17pm Rise: 9:43am, Set: 11:01pm	 Morning: 5:21am 0.8, 5:35pm 0.9 Afternoon: 11:38am 3.1, 11:54pm 3.1 Sunrise: 7:06am, Sunset: 5:40pm Best At: 4:57pm Rise: 10:06am	 Morning: 6:01am 0.9, 12:19pm 3.0 Afternoon: 6:21pm 1.0 Sunrise: 7:05am, Sunset: 5:41pm Best At: 5:41pm Set: 12:00am, Rise: 10:32am	 Morning: 6:44am 0.9, 7:12pm 1.1 Sunrise: 7:04am, Sunset: 5:42pm Best At: 6:28pm First Quarter, Set: 1:02am, Rise: 11:02am

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 Full Moon   
 Last Quarter

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 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	HIGH	LOW
Coromandel	-0 04	-0 04
Whitianga	-0 01	-0 05
Tairua	+0 11	+0 21
Whangamata	-0 02	-0 05
Waihi Beach	-0 11	-0 12

# Hui a first step towards healing gang trauma

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

Gang members from Black Power and the Mongrel Mob came together for a healing hui on July 19-21, the beginning of a journey to address trauma and fix a cycle of “broken men”.

Ngāti Maru marae was the venue as 46 members of Black Power arrived for the hui on the Friday night. Senior members of the gang, including the head of Black Power New Zealand, were among their ranks.

Hui facilitator Lucky Te Koha, from Mana Mentoring, said their presence was a testament to their commitment to improving the men they led.

“[They] knew that they needed to reduce stuff in their lives. They were leading the way.”

The hui opened with a pōwhiri, and the guest speaker was Mongrel Mob leader Ariki Paito, who attended with three of his senior men. Lucky said it was rare to see Black Power and the Mongrel Mob coming to the table together.

Lucky had already been working with Ariki for five years, and in that time he said he had seen a massive change.

“He’s got 96 per cent of his guys are working now, [his rule is] that you’re not to take methamphetamine or deal in drugs,” Lucky said.



Black Power members meet at Ngāti Maru marae as they begin to address trauma within their ranks.

Photo: SUPPLIED

“His role as head man is to lift up the guys... out of their brokenness. He said, ‘when broken men are in the family, our families are broken. When the men heal, the family heals, when the family heals, the community heals.’ So he spoke on that and the reasons why he does it.”

Following the pōwhiri, the

Black Power men powered through two days of intensive workshops, the first of four modules aimed at addressing the underlying trauma that Lucky said was the root cause of addictions and aggressiveness within the gangs.

They will hold a further three workshop weekends - the next

is due to take place on September 27-29, after which Lucky said the real challenge would begin.

“It’s the maintaining... That’s where people will fail,” Lucky said.

“Because they don’t have the right support systems around them. So that’s my next thing...

putting the right things around them. It’s a big picture.”

Lucky, himself a former member of a skinhead gang and later an organised crime syndicate, said relatable life experience was key when helping people through their trauma, and particularly those who

CONTINUED ON P4

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## Hui aims to heal gang trauma

CONTINUED FROM P3

had faced hardships within the gang systems.

"They know I've been there. I've walked out of it nearly seven years ago. If you want to learn how to change your life, you go to somebody who's done it."

And Lucky has done it. Sexually abused at a young age, addicted to heroin by 16, and using and dealing meth-amphetamine for more than 30 years, Lucky was living the life of a stereotypical gangster.

"I was heavily traumatised growing up. I say to people, [the film] *Once Were Warriors* was nothing compared to what we grew up in," he said.

"I was extremely violent and I was extremely aggressive and angry. And so everything I did - alcohol, the drugs, partying, women, all that kind of stuff - was self-medicating. I had everything you could think of, and I was still unhappy."

It took a long, hard look in the mirror to realise that mandatory rehab, prison and court-ordered programmes would do nothing for a man who was trying to hide from the pain.

"I've done every type of group you can think of, you know, anger management... I didn't want to go to any of them because I knew it wasn't going to change nothing. Because I couldn't get past the anger in me," Lucky said.

"It dawned on me, everything I do is to pleasure myself. And why am I doing that? Because I'm hurting inside. And then I realised it was trauma. Just like

that." Having come out the other side, Lucky is now a mentor with Mana Mentoring, a charitable trust helping people overcome trauma and addictions.

He's worked with people from all walks of life, he said - teachers, church-goers, youth - but the gang work is his passion. "I don't get paid to do this gang work, I go to the gangs for free. All of the gangs," he said.

"I've worked for about seven different chapters, throughout the country, I've got another seven now wanting me to go to them next year."

The modules he now works on with the gangs are a kind of talk therapy. It succeeds where rehab fails, Lucky said, because he focuses on addressing the trauma beneath the addictions.

"How do you get rid of trauma? Well, it's simple. You just talk about it. And you've got to talk about it with people that have been through it," Lucky said.

"Everybody has to speak. There's no sitting there."

July's hui was a good beginning for the members of Black Power, Lucky said. "These guys got a lot of healing over the weekend. By the time they left on Sunday, they all said, 'I feel massive, I feel so different', because they've unburdened themselves, you know. In a safe space, with friends around them," Lucky said.

"See, when you've got men that really want to change, they really invest."

**"How do you get rid of trauma? Well, it's simple. You just talk about it. And you've got to talk about it with people that have been through it."**

- Lucky Te Koha



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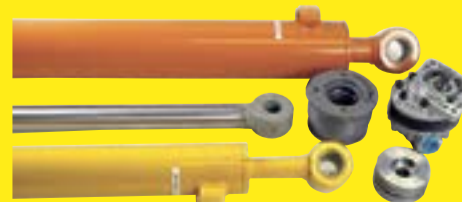
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# Protesters on parade over Thames petrol prices

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

A protest over Thames' petrol prices saw approximately 150 people gather for a peaceful march on August 3.

Protesters met at Goldfields Mall with banners and signs, and strode along Mary St and down Pollen St.

Their path took them past Mobil Thames and Gull, two of the four Thames petrol stations that have been accused of inflating petrol prices. Half the protesters remained at Gull, while the rest carried on to BP 2Go on SH 25.

Protest organiser Goldie Anderson told *The Profile* she was pleased with the turnout. "I think it made enough notice put on the

issue that it's got to put more pressure on these owners," she said.

"They've got until mid-August to get back [to the Commerce Commission] with a response and then we'll go from there."

Goldie said the protesters came from all walks of life, and she was particularly saddened to see how many elderly and disabled people were struggling with petrol prices.

"It was really good talking to people in the community and hearing each individual's stories for why they were there. It was so many reasons, most of them heartbreaking, you know, and all to do with the fact that they just couldn't afford to continue to pay these prices here."



Protesters march through Thames to call attention to the price of petrol in the town.



Photos: SUPPLIED

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# ENTERTAINMENT

## \$66k funding boost for Coro events

Five events in the Hauraki and Coromandel are set to receive a funding boost of \$66,700 from the Regional Events Promotion Fund. Funding includes \$7000 for the Paeroa Highland Games and Tattoo; \$2700 to Steam-punk The Thames; \$37,500 to Kickdown in Whangamatā; \$4500 to Whitianga Run Fest and \$15,000 to Whitianga Oceans Festival.

Coromandel MP Scott Simpson said the funding would help attract more New Zealanders to the Hauraki-Coromandel region.

“Local events, whether large or small, are fantastic opportunities to showcase everything our region has to offer,” he said.

“From our breathtaking natural scenery to our warm and welcoming communities, we have something for everyone to enjoy.”

The five events selected for funding were chosen based on their potential to encourage New Zealanders to venture beyond the main centres, he said.

“Not only are these events well-supported by locals, they are massive draw cards for people living outside our region. Visitors often build an entire trip around these land-

mark events. This investment will enhance visitation to our region throughout the year, particularly outside the peak summer season, contributing to a more sustainable tourism and hospitality sector.

“Our government is ensuring support targets events identified by Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and local councils as opportunities to draw more domestic visitors to the Hauraki and Coromandel districts.”

The Regional Events Promotion Fund, which was part of the government’s 100-point Economic Plan, would help the Coromandel area maximise the value of tourism, which remained one of New Zealand’s top export earners, he said.

“Our government is dedicated to fostering economic growth, and bolstering regional tourism is a key part of that commitment. By supporting these events, we aim to provide significant economic opportunities for regional and rural New Zealand.”

Round two applications for the fund are expected to open in March, 2025, allowing events scheduled for July and early August, 2025, to benefit from additional promotion.



Via Sedna, features an all-female team who sail from France through the rough Arctic Sea to Greenland. Photo: SUPPLIED

## Film Festival fundraiser returns

The New Zealand Mountain Film Festival is returning to Thames on August 18, showcasing some of the world’s best adventure filmmaking.

Screening at the Thames War Memorial Civic Centre as a fundraiser for Te Puru School, the Wai-naka-based festival is in its 22nd year and is New Zealand’s only adventure filmmakers’ competition.

At 2pm, the following New Zealand made films will screen: *Up the Cass, No Gas*, an annual ski pilgrimage to the Cass Valley sparks a fresh perspective as friends contemplate their environmental footprint. *Ladies Behind The Lens*, five determined women delve into the world of adventure filmmaking; grappling with

equipment malfunctions, weather constraints and logistical nightmares. *The Adventure of Racing*, a female-led team compete at the adventure racing World Championships in Fiordland. *Kahurangi: a South to North Traverse*, three teenage boys set off into rugged bush to walk the full length of the Kahurangi National Park. *Inshalah*, whimsical travel by bicycle the mountains of northern Pakistan.

*The War on Style*, a poetic look into the mind and outrageous life of protagonist Hank Bilous. Finally, *Terra Incognita*, world-class local skiers experiment with pack horses to access ski touring.

At 7pm, four festival award winners will screen: *To Be Frank*, exploring authenticity and com-

munity in surfing via a 73-year-old South Bay icon and humble local (USA).

*Nuptse*: Touching the Intangible, three French alpinists dream of opening a new extreme climbing route on the legendary south face of Nuptse (subtitles).

*Light Beams For Helena*, pushing the limits in the free-diving world (USA), and *Via Sedna*, an all-female team sail from France through the rough Arctic Sea to Greenland, and attempt the first ascent of a big wall (subtitles).

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Sharing stories is the aim for a new event coming to Paeroa. Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

### In Brief

**MSD CENTRE REOPENS**  
The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) Thames Service Centre, operating out of the Wintec Building, is reopened on August 5. Regional commissioner Tracey Smith said the building was closed for repairs following building damage caused by a burst water pipe. "Work is still being completed but we are open for appointments," she said. "We want to thank people for their patience during this time. We are looking forward to welcoming them back."

**WALK CLOSED**  
The Department of Conservation has advised the closure of the Waiomu Kauri Grove walk during weekdays in August, while track maintenance is undertaken to help mitigate kauri dieback. The closures will be from 8.30am to 2.30pm, Monday to Friday.

**CAREER KIOSKS**  
Eleven Inzone Careers kiosks have been installed across Hauraki and the Coromandel. The digital kiosks are free to use, and available to students, jobseekers and the public. They offer access to information on career support, job options, and a variety of employment resources. They are funded by the Ministry of Social Development on a 12-month lease, under the ministry's cyclone recovery fund. The kiosks are located at Thames High School, Hauraki Plains College, Paeroa College, Waihi College, Whangamatā Area School, Mercury Bay Area School, Coromandel Area School, and Te Whare kura o Manaia.

# Storytellers to tell tales in Paeroa

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

A group of Paeroa women are hoping to bring history to life with the town's first storytelling event.

The informal Sunday afternoon performance, scheduled for October 6 at 2pm, will feature around 10 storytellers, led by master of ceremonies Rino Wilkinson. Each will present a story of their choosing, speaking for seven to 10 minutes.

The organisers of the event, Glenys Lewis and Sybil Woolmore, said the idea came about from their friend Patty, who

heard of a storytelling festival while visiting Texas in the United States.

There is no set theme for the event, although the ladies hoped participants would be interested in speaking about Paeroa and its history. "There's just so many interesting people in Paeroa that have got... stories about the history of Paeroa, but they've got stories of their lives as well," Glenys said.

"But that's the thing, with stories you never quite know what they are."

The event will be casual and relaxed. Everyone is welcome,

and with entry and afternoon tea costing only a gold coin, they hoped people would be open to giving the concept a try.

"We want to keep it informal, not a frightening thing where people go, 'oh, I couldn't get up and stand and tell a story'. We just want them to be relaxed and able to share it," Glenys said.

Several speakers have already been secured - Sybil, a poet and author, is one of them - and the ladies said there were bound to be some interesting tales told.

"One of the speakers is a gentleman that's done an around

the globe expedition and he was on [a] support ship, back in the 1970s," Sybil said.

"He's got lots of different stories about feeding Mars Bars to polar bears and all sorts of things... There will be some really interesting stuff, I think."

**DETAILS: Storytelling and afternoon tea, October 6, 2pm at Paeroa Little Theatre. Gold coin entry, no booking required. Prospective speakers should contact Glenys 020 425 0244 or Sybil 027 224 7349 to register their interest.**



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# Popular bachelor can't recall deadly accident



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

Around midnight on 7 June 1890, Mr Duder returned to the Masonic Hotel, Devonport, where he resided.

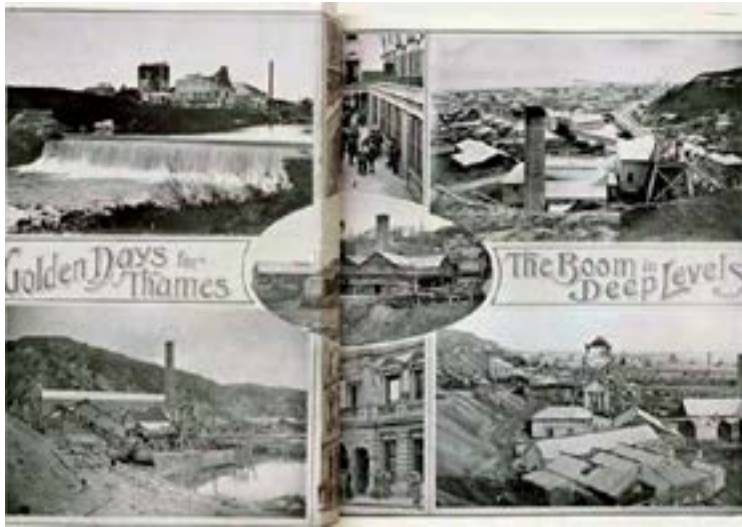
He and Captain Falconer had arrived by the late boat from Auckland, having been to view a racehorse.

The Masonic was closed and Mr Duder had to get in the back way where he discovered Samuel Turtle lying at the foot of the back staircase, unconscious. He immediately roused the household and Dr Parkinson was summoned.

After examination, the doctor advised Samuel's removal to Auckland Hospital. He was taken over by the morning boat.

Samuel was an old Thames resident and a very popular one, the 49-year-bachelor being jovial, humorous, and generous. He was a share broker said to be worth many thousands of pounds.

On enquiry at the North Shore Police Station as to



Golden days for Thames – the boom in deep levels. Photo: SUPPLIED

whether they could cast any light on the unfortunate affair Inspector Broham advised he was still waiting on a report.

Samuel was in a precarious condition. Once he recovered consciousness he said had no recollection of how the accident occurred.

He was able to make his Will in favour of his one sibling, a sister in Ireland. It was now thought that Samuel, who had been suffering from la grippe (influenza), had also returned late to the locked hotel and, seized with dizziness, fallen down the back steps while trying to get in.

Day by day Samuel worsened until he became comatose and nine days after the fall he died.

An inquest found his skull was fractured in two places. Much regret, wrote the Hamil-

ton correspondent of the *Auckland Star*, was expressed at Samuel's untimely death.

He had seen him the afternoon of the accident, and had a long talk about old Thames times - "Little did I think it was the last yarn we should have".

The news of Samuel's demise was received at Thames with sorrow.

He was a member of the Sir Walter Scott Lodge of Freemasons and the brethren organised his funeral. During the day various coastal steamers had their flags at half-mast as a token of respect.

The funeral cortege left Auckland Hospital and travelled to the Queen Street Wharf to meet the steamer Rotomahana, a number of share brokers accompanying Samuel.

On arrival at Thames that

evening they were met by a deputation of Freemasons, and Samuel taken to their hall in Owen Street. At 2pm the next day the cortege, numbering about 100 including a large number of Thames' leading citizens, left for Tararu Cemetery. The hearse was followed by several carriages, after which came a large number of Samuel's friends from all classes of the community.

Samuel had arrived at Thames soon after its opening, and for a brief period he worked as a miner but soon abandoned manual labour for the more congenial occupation of share broker, becoming prominent in mining circles for nearly twenty years.

He was also a member of the Thames Drainage Board. He had partnered with the James Bruce Morpeth, share broker of Auckland, and when Mr Morpeth had died two years previously Samuel moved to Auckland, a more suitable centre for business.

He became a member of the Brokers' Association where his genial disposition attracted many friends. Samuel was also greatly interested in all sorts of sports and quite a horse racing enthusiast.

"One of our most notable men has gone from our midst, forever", lamented the *Thames Advertiser*.

Rumours of Samuel's considerable wealth of £15,000, however, were discovered to have been very much exaggerated, his estate being under £1,200.

## Chris' Quiz

Weekly quiz compiled by Chris Parminter

1. Which Waikato town has been referred to as the 'corrugated capital of the world'?
2. How many Rugby World Cup final matches has South Africa lost?
3. What kind of creature is Mordecai from the American animated series *Regular Show*?
4. On which New Zealand island is the largest Pohutukawa forest in the world?
5. Who was the winner of 2024's Billy T Yellow Towel award for comedy? a) Hayley Sproull, b) Lana Walters or c) Alice Sneddon?
6. Kikuyu is a type of a) grass, b) ethnic group, c) language or d) all of these?
7. Five Eyes is an intelligence group composed of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and which other country?
8. *Sweet Caroline*, the 1969 hit song by Neil Diamond was written about his wife at the time. What was her name? a) Caroline, b) Carol, or c) Marcia?
9. Tin cans in New Zealand are made mainly of which material?
10. Which Waikato river system is longer: Kauaeranga, Ohinemuri, Piako or Waihou?



Answers: 1. Tirau; 2. None; 3. Bird (Blue Jay); 4. Rangitoto; 5. b) Lana Walters; 6. d) all of these; 7. z. United States; 8. c) Marcia; 9. Steel; 10. Waihou (186 km in length).

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Paeroa Community Patrol members at the NZ Police Northcoms Centre. Photo: SUPPLIED

## Paeroa patrollers visit control centres

A group of Paeroa Community Patrol members visited NZ Police Northcoms Centre in South Auckland recently, organised by the group's local Police liaison officer.

After being welcomed to the centre, a security briefing and presentation from senior staff was held, explaining what departments were based in the Coms Centre building, and how the various teams operated.

The Community Patrol NZ (CPNZ) group was then able to see the radio and 111 centre on the main floor in full swing, meet some of the operators they deal with, and get a taste of the scale and pressure of the operation.

"It was great to actually meet some of the team we speak to from time to time and receive their personal thanks to us for what we do in supporting the Police and community," Paeroa Community Patrol Group chairman Martyn Jones said.

The day of the visit was meant to be a "normally quieter midweek time" but the

whole floor soon filled up with other various visitors including a new intake of Police in training, he said.

From there the tour took in other departments involved with city surveillance cameras and other strategic operations for the region, including a look at the forensic laboratories.

After a group photo, it was back down south to the Waikato District Command Centre (DCC) in Hamilton to meet this team in their own region and see first hand how they connected with the Auckland based Northern operation and how things worked around the wider Waikato region.

"The DCC team also gave their personal thanks for the all important work CPNZ volunteers do to assist them, and this personal thanks reinforces why we do what we do as a volunteer group in helping make communities safer together," Martyn said.

"A big thanks to all involved from NZ Police who made this a very special visit."

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# Rural Life

## Smoothing the road: when dairy does well, New Zealand does well

### OPINION

By Jim van der Poel, DairyNZ chair

Right now on dairy farms around the country farmers are managing feed, animals, budgets, machinery, weather. They're having conversations with their bankers and insurers. Finding time for their kids.

That is just life for farming families and everyone has to balance their own challenges.

In the background for farmers as with other industries are pending political cycles. These can bring changes to regulation, uncertainty while policy is decided upon, and a disconnect between national and local level while decisions are made.

And to paraphrase Nuffield Scholar

Kylie Leonard, it's best for farmers to be at the table, rather than on the menu.

DairyNZ is an industry-good organisation, representing all 10,600 dairy farmers. Our duty is to help keep them and their farming businesses moving forward. In the past nine months of a changed government, we've seen several policy changes begin to roll out around methane targets, ag out of the ETS, further reform of the RMA, and the beginnings of a new pastoral sector group.

Much of this we've advocated for on behalf of farmers and we welcome – particularly in a time of high inflation and input costs. It is our job to keep engaging, and we do so with information that is supported by world-class

scientists and farm system expertise.

We are submitting on behalf of farmers in regard to climate targets and emissions reduction plans, immigration and workforce development, the biosecurity act and freshwater standards. We are following closely impending government changes to genetic technology regulation.

We do what we can to help get bipartisan support for regulations that are logical and support good farming practices. Hopefully then we can bed down those rules and not have them disrupted every few years.

DairyNZ has 17 years of science and research to specifically benefit dairy farmers. It is important we share our knowledge with decision-makers to ground policy in reality.

Much of our knowledge aligns with the realities of the global market, which is changing the way we farm.

Just recently at the Primary Industries NZ Summit we heard from Rabobank that 80 percent of Zealand's exports are destined for countries with mandatory climate-related disclosures either in force or on the way.

New Zealand dairy farmers have always innovated and will continue to do so. This is the basis of New Zealand's prosperity and today we stand proud as an internationally competitive dairy farming nation.

We produce over 20 billion litres of milk a year and bring in \$25 billion in export revenue. Dairy employs 55,000 people and last year accounted for about 36% of all New Zealand's

goods exports.

New Zealand dairy farmers have a solid reputation as producers of safe, low-emissions, high-quality milk who uphold the highest standards of care for animals and environment.

The success of dairy underpins the success of the New Zealand economy and the wellbeing of New Zealanders.

At the end of the day farmers and politicians surely have a similar end goal – a prosperous, safe, secure country and strong links to the outside world. It's good to be at the table so that on behalf of our farmers we can chart a more enduring course for sustainable growth.

Because at the end of the day, when dairy does well, New Zealand does well.

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# Rural Life

## Farmer confidence stubbornly low

Farm confidence has fallen since the start of the year, with debt, interest rates and banks causing the greatest concern, Federated Farmers' latest Farm Confidence survey shows.

The survey of 1400 dairy, sheep, beef and arable farmers shows confidence remains stuck in historically low territory.

"It's incredibly frustrating to see farmer confidence is still sitting at these stubbornly low levels," Federated Farmers national president Wayne Langford said.

"Unfortunately, these survey results are just reflecting how farming families are truly feeling out there at the moment.

"Farmers have really been doing it tough for some time now, with high interest rates, low commodity prices and sky-high input costs making it really hard to earn a living."

Langford said Federated Farmers was encouraged by a slight lift in farmer confidence shown in its January survey - but things had since gone backwards.

"Restoring farmer confidence is a huge focus for Federated Farmers. We clearly have a big job ahead of us, but we're up for the challenge. We'll keep pushing hard to improve the lives of farming families across the country. The government have done a lot of work repealing and rewriting some of the most unworkable regulations, but there's still so much more to be done."

But the six-monthly survey clearly shows it's not only regulation that's eroding farmer confidence, Langford said.

"There are a whole range of other issues that are also having an impact. These include concerns about banking, high interest rates, soft farm-gate prices, the ability to find staff, and the general economic outlook for the country.

"Farmers will also be watching interest rates closely and desperately hoping for a rate cut later this year to help relieve some of the pressure they're feeling."

Carried out in mid-July, the survey found more farmers consider the current economic climate to be 'bad' compared to January. This is the second-worst result in the survey's history, with the lowest being July, 2023.

Things are no better when looking ahead, with more than half of farmers expecting economic conditions to deteriorate in the year ahead, slightly worse than in January.

"The survey also paints a bleak picture of what's happening with farm profitability," Langford said. "Just over a third of farmers are making a loss right now, while only 27 per cent say they're making a profit and 39 per cent breaking even. If that's not bad enough, more than half of farmers expect their profitability to decline over the next 12 months."

Langford said he was deeply concerned for farmers' wellbeing and what this might mean for their families, rural communities and the wider New Zealand economy.

"In this July survey, about half of farmers told us their mental health and wellbeing is being affected by worries about things like interest, farmgate prices and regulation.

"We want to see farmers thriving and feeling confident, not lying in bed stressing about how to pay their bills and keep the lights on. "When farmers lose confidence, they cut their spending and shave costs from their business, and that has major flow-on effects for the wider economy."

Farmers said their biggest concern was debt, interest and banks. "This is consistently coming through as the main issue for farmers, which is why we have pushed so hard for an independent inquiry into rural banking. It's great the government have given an inquiry the green light, but farmers actually want to see action and for changes to be made to the system."

**DETAILS: Full results of the survey online: [fed-farm.org.nz/FarmConfidence](http://fed-farm.org.nz/FarmConfidence).**



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SPORTS

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# Old rivals meet in fiercely contested finals

**HOCKEY**

The senior men's and women's Thames Valley Hockey finals saw the top four teams compete for the Nicholson Shield and the Wilson Cup.

The Maramarua men's team, which was newly formed this year, were unbeaten going into the final but faced seasoned Swampies in the final. An intense and fast game developed, worthy of a grand final.

Swampies hit hard and with a converted penalty corner within two minutes, which gave a clear signal of intent. Seven minutes in and an additional field goal saw them lead at 2-0.

A penalty corner for Maramarua followed shortly after by another field goal kept Swampies ahead 3-1. Maramarua converted a penalty corner, but time was against them.

The full time score was 3-2, with Swampies becoming Thames Valley Senior Men's Champions for the eighth time.

Goal scorers were Harry Ratcliffe, Liam Gordon, Phil Williams, Cullen Remnant and Hamish Preston.

In the women's finals, Waitakaruru met Ngatea Strikers in a game that ignited old rivalries.

With a nil-all score at half time, both teams came out fir-



ing in the second half. Waitakaruru put points on the board to lead 1-0, shortly followed by a converted penalty corner by Strikers and scores were locked at 1-1.

A second field goal by Waitakaruru towards the end of play sealed the win at 2-1 and Waitakaruru became Thames Valley women's champions.

Goal scorers were S J Laing, Serena Hammond and Kirsty Harris.

Thames Valley Hockey thanked the umpires Julena Phillips, James Phillips and Jeremy Cryer, who controlled the fiercely contested games.



Clockwise from top left: Senior men's and women's finals champions Swampies and Waitakaruru, with runners up Ngatea Strikers and Maramarua. Photos: SUPPLIED

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## Poverty of home or heart

### OPINION

By MICHAEL WILKES



I write today considering poverty. In my time as a youth worker, I have seen poverty of home and poverty of heart.

Sometimes they are found in the same place.

A single mother so crushed by her inability to support her life that she turned to drugs to cope and crime to pay the bills and put food on the table.

Overtaken by her situation, she simply was not supporting her children.

But often it is not found in the same place.

I was privileged to be brought up in a home where the heart was rich.

My Dad became unemployed in my pre-teens and experienced a head injury so severe that he never worked properly again. We were a family with three kids, a suffering father, living on the invalid's benefit.

Yet my Mum was a rock, she budgeted like the best, and loved and carried us through. Financially it was hard, but we were loved, supported and able to thrive.

When I had an opportunity to visit a remote village in Vanuatu where they lived in dirt huts and lived off the land, I saw poverty of home, but not heart.

Kids made soccer balls from old rags and had fun. Parents made time to sit

and tell stories of old and pass on what was important in life. Over there it was obvious, here not so much.

Yet I have stood in the homes of students who have it all. Any device they desire, no shortage of food, nothing to want for... Except their parents' attention.

Mum and Dad are so busy chasing the dream, funding a lifestyle that keeps up with the rest, and yet in the home is a poverty of heart.

Kids return home to a screen in each room, mum and dad retreat to their own devices, exhausted from another day in the rat race, and our kids suffer for it.

At some point we need to re-evaluate what truly matters. Because we have homes in our community, where they have little, but they love big.

Some of the greatest generosity I have seen has come from those with very little to give.

So, as we consider our families, our homes, our children. May we evaluate where we are at.

We may not be able to improve poverty of home. But we can improve poverty of heart.

*Michael Wilkes is a Living Well Trust Youth Worker. He and his team provide mentoring and resilience programmes across Thames and Paeroa to more than 300 students a year. They are passionate about supporting our young people to thrive. Much of this work is funded outside of schools and it becoming increasingly challenging in the current climate. Email michael@living-well.org.nz to sign up to their quarterly newsletter or to become a supporter.*

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Tree Shapes staff from left, Raniera, Matthew and Tony.

Photo: SUPPLIED

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"We didn't want to close down Tree Shapes because the staff are fantastic and it's such a massive service for Hauraki, Thames, Paeroa areas," Janella said.

The team were carrying on with work as usual, Janella said, with one staff member looking after quoting on Fridays, and Janel-

la sorting the bookings, queries and administration from down the line.

Although the system had been working well so far, Janella said the business was also up for sale.

"It's an awesome opportunity for someone else to take over," she said.

The biggest thing the owner wanted to put out there was that they have fantastic staff and didn't want to lay them off and lose that service for the Hauraki, Janella said.

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# SPORTS REPORTS

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

## FOOTBALL

Thames Football Club's late title charge was thwarted on Saturday by a resolute Ngaruawahia side, with a solitary goal the only difference.

Thames knew getting a result here would be a big ask with key players absent and Ngaruawahia boasting an impressive home record, losing just twice at Centennial Park this season.

Chances were few and far between in the first half, a small pitch forced a congested midfield battle with the uneven surface making possession retention problematic. Harry Williscroft tried his luck twice from distance, cutting in from the left, but his shots drifted wide without troubling JP Page in the opposition goal. Ngaruawahia created the best chance of the opening 45 as a curling corner found the leaping Ethan O'Brien, whose thumping header rebounded off the crossbar and back into play. Thames struggled to build up play but ended the half the stronger.

A James Harvey cross came agonisingly close to finding Xavier Brown's outstretched leg in front of goal.

The second half continued in a similar ilk. Ngaruawahia stuck to their game plan, aggressive in the tackles, suffocating the midfield space, making it difficult to unleash their weapons on the wings.

Thames can thank Salde Castello for keeping the score level as the goalkeeper pulled off a smart save low to his left to deny a well-directed

header. As the hour mark struck, so did Ngaruawahia. A freekick from the left-hand side of the box was whipped into the far corner by Zion Augustus for 1-0. Thames, desperate for the points with two games remaining, committed players forward and opted for a more direct route as they searched for the equalizer.

Williscroft marauded forward on a typical mazy run and managed to squeeze himself into a shooting position, however, Page anticipated the move and smothered the ball well. A few minutes later, a long ball into the box was expertly brought down by Mike Kim, who then appeared to be clattered by the defender - the referee waved play on despite Thames' protests.

The long balls continued but with no significant chances, Matt Bains' long-range volley didn't dip in time and with that, the referee called for full-time. With Claudeland Rovers and Northern United Humblebees extending their lead at the top of the table, Thames are now fighting for third place with Waihi - the two teams meet next week in the penultimate match of the season. Final Score Ngaruawahia 1-0 Thames FC Men's.

"Ngaruawahia were really determined to beat us today and the difference came down to one free kick that they took advantage of," player/manager Mike Kim said.

"It's a tough pill to swallow but we will now turn our focus to winning the remaining games to close out what has been a great season."

- Jonathan Coles



Thames FC's Captain Mickaël Deroncourt clears the ball.

Photo: MARK BROWN

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## CLASSIFIEDS - Deadline 12pm Monday

### Death Notices

**LAURENSEN, Richard Owen:**  
Born 13th June 1960. Passed away peacefully at home on 3rd August 2024, with his treasured family at his side, aged 64 years. Loved husband and mate of Sharon. Adored Dad of Stephanie, Brad, Nick, and Grandad to his Harper Joy. Father-in-law of Miranda and friend to Tay. Son of Keith and the late Gay Laurenson, son-in-law of Guy and the late Bev Speedy. Cherished brother of Wayne and Christine. Respected brother-in-law of Dale and Rhonda Speedy, Mary and the late Mike Speedy; Christine Laurenson and Chris Burt. Fun uncle and mentor of Becky, Todd, Sam, Ni, Caitlin, Rangil, Em, Josh, Theresa, Ryan, Georgina, Chris, Sarah and Matty P, Emily and Thomas Burt, Debbie Calder and Michael Fisher. Good mate and trusted friend to many. So gracious to the very end. A service to celebrate Richard's life will be held at the Whangamata Rugby Club, Aickin Road, Whangamata on Friday 9th August at 11am, followed by private cremation.

### TWENTYMANS

**GREENWOOD, Maureen (Biddy):**  
Died peacefully on July 28th at her home, aged 84. Much loved sister of Dooley and Corrie Goonan. Special aunt of Karin, Tony and Jo and their families. RIP Bid, we love you.

### In Memoriam

**WRIGHT Lois Mary (Keane):**  
B: 24-10-1930  
Died: 10-8-2019  
5 Years has passed since we lost our dear MUM.  
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### Public Notice

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Last month's winner of the lotto ticket was Ross Cox, who found Pete in the July 24th edition in the Hauraki Plains Motors advert. Go to page 2 for details on how to enter.





# Fundraising efforts set to bloom

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

The ladies of Paeroa's RSA have already raised close to \$400 for the Cancer Society ahead of their annual Daffodil Day fundraising luncheon, and are hoping to top last year's donation of \$4850.

As in previous years, the women have picked hundreds of daffodils, arranging them into \$5 bouquets for sale. Planning for the luncheon is also well underway, and they are expecting it to be just as popular as ever - last year they required an extensive waiting list as the event sold out well ahead of time.

This year's luncheon will feature door prizes, raffles and auctions, along with a guest speaker. The money raised will go towards support and resources for cancer patients in the Waikato/Bay of Plenty, including a supportive care nurse, counselling, accommodation, and therapeutic treatments.

"It is meaningful to a lot of people, really. My sister's just been through cancer this year... I think everyone is affected," Margaret Ramshaw said.

"I lost too many people. I lost my husband, my brother, and my father. All with different types of cancer. So I'm paying back," Jackie McTier said.

While the RSA women are



Elaine Lally, Margaret Ramshaw, Joan Waterson and Jackie McTier are preparing for another successful Daffodil Day luncheon at the Paeroa RSA.

Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

already doing their part for the cause, the Cancer Society said there was also a need for volunteers for its Paeroa collection on Daffodil Day, August 30.

"Daffodil Day is a symbol of hope for the one in three New Zealanders living with cancer," Cancer Society fundraising event specialist Van Kilburn said.

"We are extremely apprecia-

tive of the incredible fundraising we've received in the past from the Paeroa RSA and our previous Daffodil Day co-ordinator, Barbara Berry, as well as local volunteers.

"We'd really like to have a street collection in Paeroa again this year, so if you are able to donate some time over August to paint Paeroa yellow, we'd love to hear from you."

**DETAILS: Daffodil Day Luncheon, August 26 at Paeroa RSA, 11am. Tickets \$20, available from Additions Gift Shop on Normanby Rd. Anyone interested in becoming an area collector for the Cancer Society can contact Van Kilburn, 027 181 00841 or fundraising@cancersociety.org.nz for details.**



## Knitting to be donated to birthing unit

The July Meeting of the Goldfields Women's Institute commenced with the Aspiration and Prayer.

Thoughts were given to several members who are either in hospital or not well at home. The Motto for the month - "The nice thing about teamwork is that you have others on your side" was read by Jeannine Oliver. The Roll Call - Sing Say or Pay \$1, had everyone having a saying or funny story which was great, although not so good for our finances.

The Good Deed - a new Get Well, Birthday, Sympathy or Thinking of you Card. These will help with sending out cards to members over the next 12 months. Our birthday girl this month is Dot McHardy. Raffles were won by Val Bowen and Bev Schenkel. Arrangements were made for two members to attend the Federation's Fun Day at the Waihi Beach RSA on July 16 and an apology will be sent to Waihi/Waihi Beach Group Day for their meeting on August 12.

A discussion was held regarding our knitting, and it was decided to send some knitting to the Birthing Unit at Waikato Hospital. Next month's meeting will be our Pizza Lunch which everyone is looking forward to. Lunch was a very leisurely time as we lingered a lot longer than usual which everyone enjoyed.

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# SUDOKU

162

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

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8	4			1	3			
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HARD

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EASY

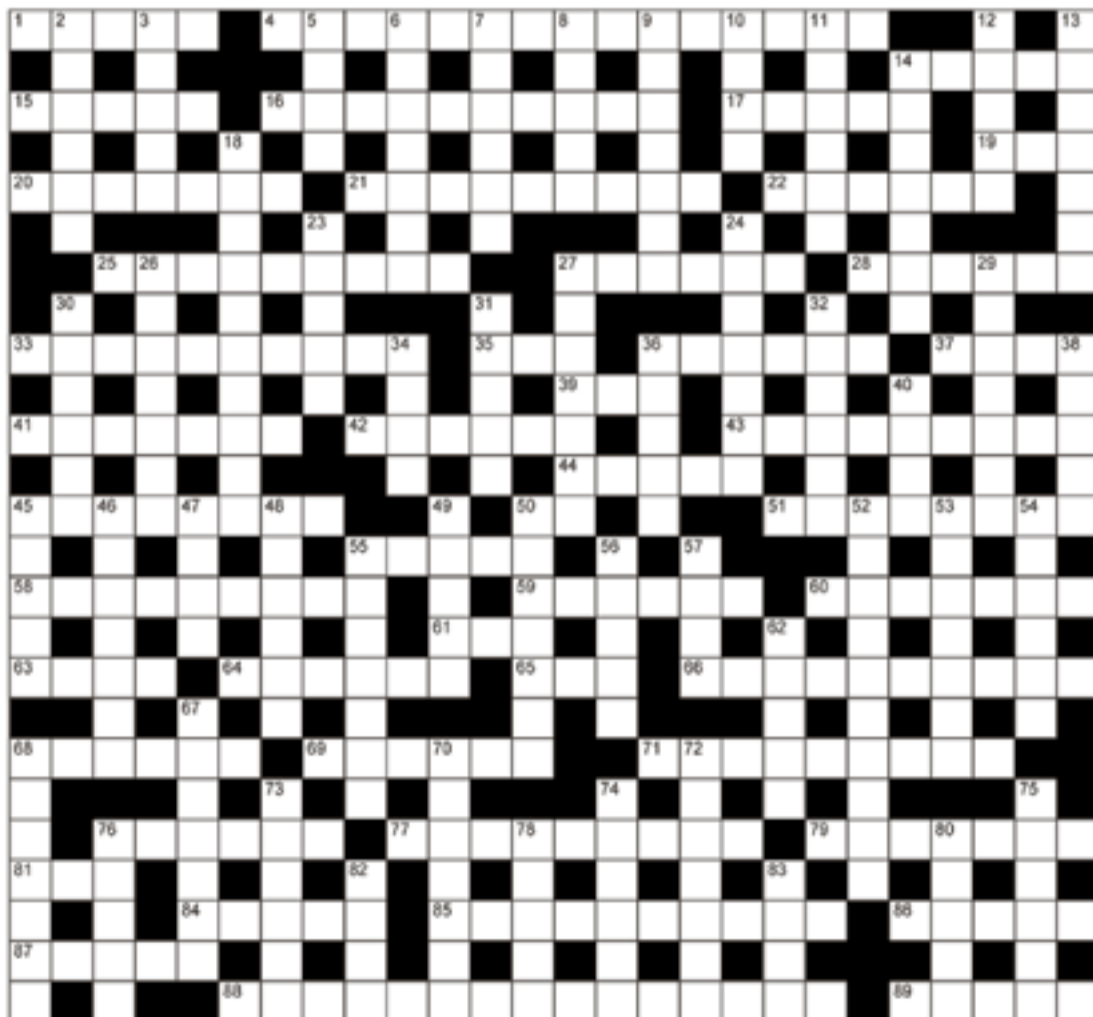
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9	8	3	5	7	4	6	1	2
4	5	2	6	1	3	8	9	7
1	2	6	7	3	5	9	8	4
5	9	7	8	4	2	1	3	6
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# JUMBO CROSSWORD

182

- ACROSS**
- 1 Porcelain (5)
  - 4 Very seldom (4,2,1,4,4)
  - 14 Sag (5)
  - 15 Scale (5)
  - 16 Examination (10)
  - 17 Blockade (5)
  - 19 Can (3)
  - 20 Monotonous (7)
  - 21 Monks' residence (9)
  - 22 Mental giant (6)
  - 25 Lucky (9)
  - 27 Warns (6)
  - 28 Savoury flan (6)
  - 33 Level, plumb (10)
  - 35 Rose fruit (3)
  - 36 Optical illusion (6)
  - 37 Cold flakes (4)
  - 39 Road danger (3)
  - 41 Soldier's blade (7)
  - 42 Reddish metal (6)
  - 43 Carried on (10)
  - 44 Bungling (5)
  - 45 Checks the size of (8)
  - 50 Upon (2)
  - 51 Body organ (8)
  - 55 Room under roof (5)
  - 58 Rodent snare (9)
  - 59 Summer sport (6)
  - 60 Inspiring wonder (7)
  - 61 Pair (3)
  - 63 Stylishly fashionable (4)
  - 64 Ship's kitchen (6)
  - 65 Flying insect (3)
  - 66 Feigning (10)
  - 68 Colour remover (6)
  - 69 A season (6)
  - 71 Spinning blade (9)
  - 76 Minimum attendance for a valid meeting (6)
  - 77 Very steep cliff (9)
  - 79 Early childhood (7)
  - 81 Big bird (3)
  - 84 Useful quality (5)
  - 85 Rival (10)
  - 86 Strike hard (5)
  - 87 Proposal (5)
  - 88 People of the same type, character, or interests (5,2,1,7)
  - DOWN**
  - 2 Light gas (6)
  - 3 Wanderer (5)
  - 5 Religious sisters (4)
  - 6 Take advantage of (7)
  - 7 Flower fluid (6)
  - 8 Erected (5)
  - 9 Disturb the composure of (7)
  - 10 Disguise (4)
  - 11 Followed orders (6)
  - 12 Heavy footwear (5)
  - 13 Pin for thread bobbin (7)
  - 14 Sneaky (7)
  - 18 One selling to bidders (10)
  - 23 Merge (5)
  - 24 Lure (7)
  - 26 Menacing, foreboding (7)
  - 27 In pairs (anag)(7)
  - 29 Rebuke formally (7)
  - 30 Long sea, space journey (6)
  - 31 Form (5)
  - 32 Meeting programme (6)
  - 34 Plunder (4)
  - 36 Measuring device (5)
  - 38 Walks in water (5)
  - 40 Gramophone record (4)
  - 45 Ape (5)
  - 46 Offensive and insulting (7)
  - 47 Second-hand (4)
  - 48 Hearing impediment (6)
  - 49 Research (5)
  - 50 A month (7)
  - 52 Pacific country (3,7)
  - 53 Leavings (7)
  - 54 Marzipan flavour (6)
  - 55 Clap (7)
  - 56 Go in (5)
  - 57 Hobble (4)
  - 62 Assists (5)
  - 67 Student (7)
  - 68 Ennui (7)
  - 70 Country in NW Africa (7)
  - 72 Sale document (7)
  - 73 Breakfast food (6)
  - 74 Orb (6)
  - 75 Blame for (6)
  - 76 Drink down heartily (5)
  - 78 Punctuation mark (5)
  - 80 Let (5)
  - 82 Ear decoration (4)
  - 83 Sleep lightly (4)



**PREVIOUS SOLUTION**

ACROSS: 1 Copious, 4 Troubadour, 9 Corsica, 13 Mare, 14 Turret, 15 Notice, 16 Maestro, 19 Congeal, 20 Avoid like the plague, 21 Drivel, 22 Midway, 24 Paramount, 29 Consumes, 30 During, 31 Waylaid, 35 Umbrella, 36 Afraid, 37 Away, 38 Cross, 39 See, 41 Timid, 43 Leaves, 47 Strap, 50 Fad, 54 Spout, 55 Moth, 56 Sallow, 57 Spyglass, 60 Contain, 61 Sneeze, 62 Toreador, 65 Enchanted, 67 Banish, 68 Throne, 72 Wear out one's welcome, 75 Related, 77 Penalty, 78 Grille, 79 Scorch, 80 Silo, 81 Freezer, 82 Prospectus, 83 Success.

DOWN: 1 Comic, 2 Paranoia, 3 Squall, 4 Terra firma, 5 Outdo, 6 Bone-dry, 7 Detain, 8 Uncle, 10 On approval, 11 Sustain, 12 Circus, 17 Benevolent, 18 Wheat, 21 Discuss, 23 Wistful, 25 Annual, 26 Asylum, 27 Trudge, 28 Siesta, 30 Drama, 32 Lard, 33 Able, 34 Pact, 40 Employ, 42 Iron, 44 Easter, 45 Value, 46 Shorten, 48 Repeat, 49 Pigeonhole, 50 Flaw, 51 Deserve, 52 Duet, 53 Change, 58 Silhouette, 59 Prosperous, 63 Envoy, 64 Tortoise, 66 Narrate, 67 Believe, 69 Meteor, 70 Swells, 71 Fracas, 73 Error, 74 Onset, 76 Dross.



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SPORTS

# World Schools Fest to host Valley's best

RUGBY

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

It's not every day that people are given the chance to play sports on the other side of the world.

However, five young people from the Hauraki Plains and Thames Valley areas have landed an opportunity on the world stage.

Hunter Growden, Chris Lourens, Rohan Landy, Nikora Tawa and Ethan Watts have been selected to play in an invitational under-18 New Zealand rugby team at the World Schools Festival in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in December.

Seventeen-year-old Thames High School deputy head boy Hunter Growden told *The Profile* he was super excited when he found out the news. "I was around the boys and stuff, so they were all super happy for me."

Hunter said he'd played rugby his whole life and had looked forward to playing at the festival for a few years. It was his friends and family who helped keep him motivated, he said. "They help me get to the gym and they help me with all my dietary requirements and stuff all the time. I really just enjoy playing for them and with them."

When asked if there would be more opportunities to come from this, Hunter said: "100 per cent".

"Hopefully, I'll just be able to pick them up and be able to bring my A game to this."

"As long as I can just put my best foot forward and kind of con-



Clockwise from left: Ethan Watts, Chris Lourens, Rohan Landy, Nikora Tawa and Hunter Growden.



Photos: SUPPLIED

tinue to represent and just stay humble over there - I think it will be the best way for me to go."

Over in the Hauraki Plains, 17-year-old student Chris Lourens said the thing he was most looking forward to was playing with experienced team members and getting the knowledge and experience of high-level coaches.

The rugby team won't train together until they were on the other side of the world. "So, we meet in Abu Dhabi three days before, and we train for those three days," Chris said.

One challenge that could come

up between now and the competition is: "there's still a lot of [local] rugby to be played, so there's always injuries that could pop up on the way", Chris said. "But hopefully we don't come across any of those." His advice for students interested in applying for the next World School Festivals was: "you gotta own it". "You've got to give it your 100 per cent every time you take [to] that field - you never know who's watching."

Meanwhile, fellow schoolmate 17-year-old Rohan Landy said his best advice was: "if you ever think of doing something big - chase

your dreams, set your goals and work out what you need to work on".

"If it's personal skills or leadership - just do your best and enjoy yourself", he said.

One thing that helped Rohan stay motivated was having his mum and grandma "who always go to every game, and haven't missed out on one", he said.

Rohan was looking forward to meeting other passionate rugby players, he said.

Seventeen-year-old Nikora Tawa said he had friends who made it into the team in 2022

which "motivated me to sign up".

Nikora said he was looking forward to his chance to play under professional coaches and with other international teammates.

His family, friends and teachers inspired him to give his best, Nikora said.

"Just knowing I have people that back me gives me motivation."

Nikora said: "the culture of the team I play for makes me want to be able to bring us home a trophy".

Meanwhile, former Hauraki Plains College student 17-year-old Ethan Watts said it would be his second time participating in the event as he also played at the 2023 festival in Thailand.

"Last year it was quite nerve-racking, but I just feel way more comfortable and more excited knowing I've been there [and] done it before."

"I really want to go over there and just do my best," Ethan said.

Ethan said there were a few people he knew heading back this year: "which will be quite good because you connect with them straight away".

"As soon as you're over there, you're mates."

When asked if there was someone who inspired him, Ethan said: "it's mainly just my family, you know, [they] just do so much for me... I just want to make them proud".

The players are raising funds for the trip through raffles and givealittle.co.nz.



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