

the Ōākura Post

JUNE 2025

COVER: Starling murmurations. Photographer Fay Looney. See page 6.

The run of near misses continued for Ōākura boys in the Taranaki Champs of Champs with club triples champions Tim Ryan, Andy Shearer, and Geoff Farrant losing their 1st round game in an exciting and close encounter to eventual winners Fitzroy 16-14. The pairing of Tim Ryan and Andy Shearer was also just pipped at the post by fellow coastal team Rahotu 20-15. It was a tremendous and brave effort from all the Ōākura players participating in the Champs of Champs. The club has a proud history of drawing their teams from the board for their club champs and always punching above their weight when competing with the powerful self-selected club champion teams from other Taranaki clubs.

The highly regarded and fiercely contested Collins Trophy competition was won by Steve Muller, Meagan Breedveld and Norm Lofthouse. Muller and Lofthouse remained undefeated on the 2nd day of competition to hold out the pairing of Allan Bridgeman and Ray Haslip to take the title. Life members Jim Priest and Roy Phillips finished a gallant 3rd. The tournament is open to the community and it was great to see non-bowlers such as Mike Yardley, Norma Nelio, Meagan Breedveld, and the

As this will be the last column for the 2024/2025 season, thanks to all members that have assisted in the day to day running, green maintenance, bar, and administration of the club over the past year. Without the support of volunteers such as yourselves, the club would not be in the fantastic position it is today. Recognition goes to Wayne Robinson and his team who have excelled in providing the club a world class green. The green just keeps getting better each year. My highlights for the year are the introduction of a Community Bowls competition played over three nights in late February and the welcome return of women playing members. Community and women bowls are important and exciting areas for the club going forward.

Everyone is welcome to come on down and enjoy the hospitality of the club on Friday evenings from 4.30pm to 7pm throughout the winter months. There is lucky membership draw at 6.30pm and, who knows, we may even entice you to take up this great game.

Kaitake Community Board

The first project we are undertaking is an improvement to the surface of the walking tracks in Matekai Park, following complaints of how in wet conditions the tracks become muddy and can be difficult to negotiate. Matekai Park was established in 1980 with subsequent land being purchased to create a 6.5 hectare area that is a popular link between Ōākura village and the beach. It's an area that provides opportunities for walking in bush-like settings, and with its large wetland area and natural open spaces, it gives good views of birds and other wildlife. With the increasing number of people who use these tracks, deterioration will continue if nothing is done to remediate their surface, so having this work funded is a priority for us.

Additionally, we will continue to work with the Council Aquatic Team to co-fund accessibility improvements to the entrance of the Ōkato Community Swimming Pool complex, and we await hapū consultation outcomes to see if we are able to progress a public BBQ facility at Shearer Reserve, an interpretive storyboard panel for Lucy's Gully, and the construction of a multi-purpose Basketball/Netball/Pickleball pad at Corbett Park, through until October's local body elections.

And finally, on the subject of elections, I wish to take this opportunity to advise I will not be re-standing for the Kaitake Community Board. I consider it an absolute privilege to have been afforded the opportunity to represent and advocate for the residents of our rohe throughout my tenure on the KCB, however I feel I can add more value to both my local and to the wider district communities by stepping up a level, so I intend standing for both the Mayorality and for a Councillor position in October.

And so as not to open myself to accusations of 'inappropriate electioneering', that will be the first and the last time I will mention this in this forum.

The next meeting of the Kaitake Community Board: Monday the 30th of June 2025 at 5pm, Kaitake Community Sports Hub building, Corbett Park.



Teresa Goodin

On behalf of Teresa Goodin, Renee Hohaia,
Paul Lobb, and Cr Bryan Vickery

Investing in education means investing in school infrastructure too.



Follow facebook.com/davidmacleodmp to see when I'm next in Ōākura and for my regular updates from our electorate.



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What a Year for Oakura Boardriders Club!



The junior surfers featured in the May issue weren't named. Indy LaFranchie (left) Mikey Christiansen



It's been a massive season for the Oakura Boardriders Club, packed with milestones, community, and epic waves. Here's a quick look back at an unforgettable year:

MC Memorial Longboard Comp

We kicked things off in October with the 10th anniversary of the MC Memorial Longboard Competition. Over 55 surfers shredded the Beach Camp bank on a stunning spring day—an awesome tribute and a great start to the season.

Groms in the Water

Simon Deken and the Deken Waves crew ran two incredible terms of water safety and surf coaching, teaching over 45 kids how to surf and stay safe in the ocean. Huge shoutout to Simon and team!

New Programmes: Girls & High Performance Squads

This year saw the launch of two exciting new programmes:

- Girls Shred Squad, led by Thandi Tipene, brought young wahine together to surf and compete on the national stage.
- High Performance Boys Squad, run by Tommy Butland, focused on skill development and competition, with impressive national-level results already showing.

Wahine Waves

Back and better than ever! This summer over 40 women, some with their daughters, hit the waves together—empowering, connecting, and inspiring each other through surfing.

Club Champs

Both Junior and Senior Club Champs saw incredible turnout and competition, with over 120 surfers taking part. The seniors battled it out at Stent, while families soaked up the sun and surf during the Junior Champs at Weld Rd.

Inclusive Beach Day

Together with the Halberg Trust and Parafed Taranaki, we welcomed over 20 families from New Plymouth and Palmerston North for a fun-filled inclusive beach day—a true highlight of the year.

Tinnies & Twinnies: The Apocalypse

A wild ride of twin fin madness! 38 surfers threw down at Wahoos in one of the most entertaining comps of the year.

Friday Nights & Community Spirit

Friday nights were buzzing with community spirit and stoke. We proudly inducted five new life members, shared stories, and celebrated together under the summer sun. Our membership is now over 500 strong!

A Massive Thank You to Our Sponsors

We couldn't do it without you. Your support powers our programmes, competitions, and community spirit.

Thank you to: Vertigo, Blacksand Pizza, BTW, QP Sports Protection, Southcoast Construction, Oakura Beach Holiday Park, Insure Taranaki, Geo Search, Deken Motors, McDonald Real Estate, Set Engineering, CMK Accountants, R & Co Beauty, Emma Taylor Powers Realty, The Lawn Family, Surfside Electrical, Luke Florence Builders, Glen Johns Kitchen Design, The Winks Family, Raceway Cycles & Mowers, Maiden, Craigs Investment Partners, The Virtue, NZCT, Toi Foundation, Mint Home Loan Finance, Down to Earth Organics, Wild Ideas Exhibitions, Luna, and Cracker & Graze.



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What's happening at the Rivermouth Hub?

Winter sport is well underway for both senior and junior sports teams at the Hub – head down to Corbett Park on a Saturday or Sunday to support our teams!

Record numbers of Junior players for Kaitake Football

Kaitake FC has had a very successful start to the season, with a record high number of juniors joining the club this year and junior teams entered in 9th to 15th grades. This is a very positive step for the Club as it continues to grow.

The Senior sides have had some good results in the early rounds of their long seasons, with the Men's First team sitting undefeated at the start of May. The Men's Masters side started their campaign with a hiss and a roar, defeating Inglewood at home convincingly are holding their own in the Taranaki Masters League despite being eliminated from the Masters KO Cup. Following some mixed results at the start of the season, the Women's team had a great win against Woodleigh and sitting 3rd in its respective competition at the start of May.

Check out the Kaitake FC Facebook page for information about draws and results.

Tsunami Kaitake Netball Club Kicks Off the Season in Style!

With five teams and over 50 players, Kaitake Netball Club is growing. The Waiwhakaiho courts were buzzing as the teams hit the ground running with an Opening Tournament on Saturday 12 April. Three Kaitake teams came out on top in their sections—congratulations to Diamonds (Section 2), Kererū (9), and Sparks Youth (4) for kicking off the season with a bang! What a fantastic way to start the journey ahead.

The Winter Netball Competition is now underway on Saturdays – support is always welcome if you are out at the courts. Sunday casual games are also back up and running – these are played at 3pm at the Ōākura School courts (fine weather only) and continue until the end of Term 3.

A massive thank you to Kaitake Netball's incredible naming rights sponsors - Tsunami Sports Ltd, and Craig's Investments for standing by us once again. Also, a warm welcome to R & Co, the newest sponsor. Kaitake Netball is so grateful for your support in backing the teams and helping them thrive on the court!

Best Posts on the Coast!

Corbett Park can now lay claim to the best set of rugby goal posts on the coast following the installation of Kaitake RFC's latest asset. This was a collective effort and a special thanks is owed to the following people: Geoff Bourke and the Energyworks team for fabricating, painting, and donating the goalposts; Muzza Symons of Symons Transport for delivering the posts from Bell Block to Corbett Park; Bruce the Builder (BTB) for installing the underground steel sleeves; Stuart Glass of Hoist-N-Haul for lifting the posts into place; and all the team that assembled and manhandled the installation. These goal posts are a great addition to the fields at KCSH and will be appreciated for many seasons to come.

JOIN US! Your support through our annual \$40 SOCIAL MEMBERSHIP can help us keep our free-for-kids' approach. Especially parents of our juniors, please help us provide for your child. Just go to the Membership tab on the KCSH website and join the KCSH team – then bring all your friends and family down to the Hub and enjoy all it has to offer!

HIRE US! The Rivermouth Hub is THE BEST venue for your next special family occasion, work meeting, workshop or conference – the wow factor setting will be a special treat for your guests. Discount rates for members. Enquire now at admin@kcsh.co.nz

SUPPORT US! Friday 7th November KCSH Golf Day @ Kaitake Golf Course – ambrose format, teams of 4, prizes galore – lock it in! Limited number of hole sponsorships available (\$500/hole - includes one team entry). Enquire now at admin@kcsh.co.nz



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Fay Looney - Starling Murmurations

Starling murmurations normally start early March and last until the end of April.

They settle on the same Sugar Loaf every year.

I go most evenings; in fact I'm addicted to them as they present quite differently each evening. I've come to believe the moon phase affects them. At full moon they really perform, drifting and shaping themselves into 'flying sculptures'. People all over the City see them coming in the early evening. I watch from the end of Koru road, as they gather in hundreds and then at dusk leave for Back Beach. It's a worldwide phenomenon. You can see clips on YouTube.

I print my photos on a special brushed aluminium medium that is completely weatherproof. It shows them exactly as they look through the lens. All my images are limited editions and carry my copyright.

faylooney.com

Ōākura Tennis Club

The Ōākura Green grade (Ōākura Kowhai) had an amazing season. They had a very solid foursome: Pippa Farquhar, Julie Shlosberg, Elise Lewis and Isla Kuriger.

These talented girls did so well in their section playing interclub for the very first time and are looking forward to giving it a go next year at the youth grade. Thanks to fill-ins Alex Wipper and Isla Walker.



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Indoor Bowls

We have completed the championship fours with a round robin section play and the final. After a couple of solid wins two teams emerged for the final, Jim Priest (Skip), Bev Kirkby, Paul Bishop and Andy Marshall along with Pat Walklin (Skip), Allan Bridgeman, Steve Muller and Mary Bishop. The 12 end final started off a close affair with neither team getting ahead by 1 or 2 shots. Although slowly but surely Jim's team played the better bowls and with Pat's team chasing points the game slipped away, with victory going to Jim with an end to spare. Congratulations to Jim and team, and we look forward to the rest of the club championships over the coming months.

The Central Division Interclub also got underway which is played over five Wednesday nights. Our team of Pat Walklin, Peter Anderson, Steve Muller and Allan Bridgeman play games of fours/pairs/singles each week. They have completed the first two nights with the team playing well and winning on both occasions 11-3 and 10-4. Good luck for the rest of the nights.

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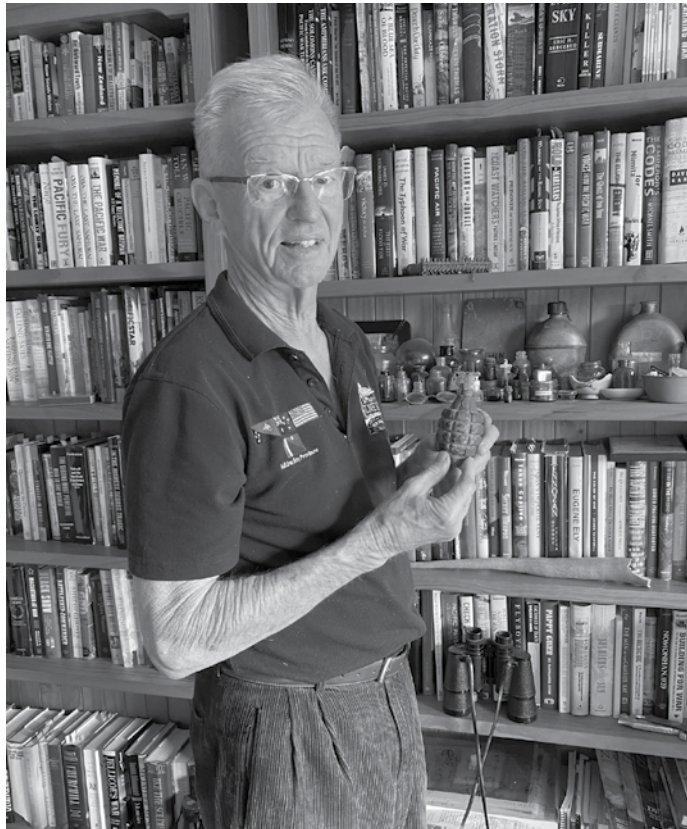
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Bruce M Petty - local authority on WWII in the Pacific

You are recognised as an expert on WWII in the Pacific. How did you become so specialised?

I've always been fascinated by history. Growing up in California I remember loving the documentary TV series Victory at Sea. Plus my mother and father and two uncles served in the U.S. military in WWII.

During the Vietnam war I served aboard a WWII era Essix-class carrier, the U.S.S Yorktown. I then went to the University of California, Santa Barbara on the GI Bill and got a degree in history.

Later I went back to school at the Cancer Foundation in Santa Barbara and studied nuclear medicine technology. I stuck with work in the medical field for more than 20 years. During that time I met and married Daniele, a paediatrician. We both wanted to travel and in 1995 she took a job in paediatrics in Saipan in the Mariana Islands. We had two young daughters by then and soon our son was born in Saipan. Since there were no jobs in nuclear medicine in Saipan, I became a stay at home dad and started research on my first book, Saipan: Oral Histories of the Pacific War.

A pivotal WWII battle was fought in Saipan in June-July 1944. So here I was anyway on this battlefield and able to explore some of the nearby islands as well. I read everything I could find on the subject and met a lot of islanders who grew up speaking Japanese rather than English. I was able to interview a lot of these individuals and their stories became part of my book.

During World War I in 1914, the Japanese — then an ally — took control of the islands, which at the time were German-owned. In June 1944, during World War II, the U.S. military invaded the Mariana Island of Saipan in a bloody encounter that resulted in 14,000 American casualties. Since then, the Northern Mariana Islands have been part of the United States.

You've travelled and lived in a variety of countries. Where were those other places, and then finally Ōmata?

After I graduated from the University of California I moved to France and studied for a year. In addition to France and the Mariana Islands, I lived in Saudi Arabia on two different occasions, once setting up a nuclear medicine department at the King Khalid University Hospital in Riyadh, and again 23 years later when Daniele took a job at a hospital in Saudia Arabia. During that tour there were car bombings of nearby western compounds and shootings, so we left after two years because of the dangers.

Rather than moving back to California and since Daniele was offered a job at the Taranaki DHB, we moved directly here in 2004 and have been here ever since. Daniele wanted to live on a lifestyle block, and our present home in Ōmata was the first place the realtor showed us. It was a typical Kiwi house of the time with no insulation or decent heating. I said it looks like a lot work and Daniele really wanted it, so we agreed to buy it. Since then we've had it fully insulated, installed central heating and extended the lounge area. It's still a lot of work with gardens and maintenance to keep up with.

Our three children went through Ōākura Primary School, Spotswood College and universities in NZ. Our oldest daughter is now a veterinarian in the US Army, our other daughter studied radiography and is busy raising a family, and our son is about to go into the NZ Army.

While I was raising the kids and writing, I coached their soccer and tennis teams and helped coach their volleyball teams. I still help with volleyball at Spotswood College though my own kids are no longer there.

Tell us about the books you've written.

I've written five books, all the products of both archival research and oral history interviews. My first book took me five years to write and was while I was in Saipan. Part I is titled Micronesian Voices while the second part focuses on American forces who served there during the war. Four of the books are about WWII in the Pacific and one is about my time in Saudi Arabia, titled Living Behind Walls.

When we moved to NZ I started researching NZ's involvement in the Pacific war. That led to my most recent book, titled New Zealand in The Pacific War. Again, besides archival research, I did a lot of oral history interviews. I interviewed NZ civilians, NZ veterans of the Pacific War and

American servicemen who were lucky enough to spend time here before heading off to Pacific Island battles.

Most of these American veterans were members of the Second Marine Division, some of whom spent up to 11 months here. Some married local women, many of whom went back to the US with their husbands, if they had survived the war. However some of these American servicemen elected to stay in NZ. There were four U.S. Marines who lived in New Plymouth and I was able to interview the last of the four before he died at the age of 90. His name was Joe Wetzel and he was married to Peggy Whiting of Eltham.

You've made an interesting career of telling your stories on cruise ships as part of their enrichment activities. How did that come about?

About fifteen years ago I got an email from Princess Cruises. They were looking for a historian to give lectures on their cruise ships and they had come across my books. I answered the email and 20 minutes later got a phone call from California. By the end of the day they made an offer for me to do nine lectures on a cruise from Los Angeles to Auckland. I thought it would be a one-off, but they really liked what I did and asked me to do more cruises.

So for the past 15 years I've been doing these lectures on cruises for a whole variety of cruise companies. A talent agent picked me up so they book my trips. The result is I've been spending six to seven months a year at sea, though I'm trying to cut back.

I understand you learned to play pickleball on those cruises.

I first saw pickleball being played while on a cruise ship. They have pickleball on many cruises now. Most of the passengers have never played before so I've ended up teaching it to people. The word got out that I'm a good pickleball coach so, even though it's not part of my contract, I teach pickleball as well as lecture. I had experience coaching all those sport teams my kids were involved with so coaching was easy for me.

Your web page has additional information our readers may be interested in, including several fascinating oral histories. Here are the details:

<https://voicesfromthepacificwar.com>

brucempetty@yahoo.com

Elayne Kessler

Bryan Vickery Kaitake Ngamōtu Ward Councillor



Cr Anneka Matthews is not seeking re-election. I know Anneka well and have interviewed her more than any other media person. Since 2017 when she stood as an ACT Party candidate until 2022 I have done more than 20 videos on issues dear to her heart. Protests against live exports, rodeos and her opposition to the Council banning dogs in the NP's CBD, a new lease for Taranaki Racing Inc, and the (soon to be built) Tūparakino Active Hub (just to name a few causes). Not forgetting her advocacy for veganism.

I would describe Anneka as a conviction politician. Anneka says, she's just being true to herself and her moral compass. When Anneka took maternity leave she asked if I would cover for her and take an interest in the Kaitake Community Board. It's been a privilege to do that.

The next NPDC Council (after the October election) will be very different, with a minimum of five new faces, if the incumbents (including

myself) are not re-elected. I am encouraging you to support Graham Chard's bid to get on Council. He's worked hard and deserves to be councillor. People often ask me why I don't promote myself in my column and list my achievements. Self promotion is tedious. I am more interested in supporting the community than showcasing my achievements. Furthermore my political highs and lows are reported regularly in the paper, including reversing my support for the cycling separators.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting Jules Withers (along with a number of councillors). Jules drove us in a Withers Coachlines minibus to inspect the Big Ben drilling rig near Tarata. It was awesome talking freely to someone who is part of a business (based in Ōmata) that impacts so positively on the community. I picked her brains on a raft on issues. Another recent highlight was joining Cr Sam Bennett and attending the Ōkato Anzac Day service. I let Sam represent the NPDC while I filmed the

march and the service. The edited video has been watched thousands of times on Facebook. Leadership has many forms. Paradoxically you can be invisible but very visible.

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Christian Surfers celebrate 30 years of Easter Camping at Ōākura

On Easter Monday morning I wandered down to the Motor Camp to see if I could talk to someone about this annual event. Every Easter since I've lived here the big white tent has gone up and the Ōākura Motor Camp has filled. This year the surf and the weather hadn't been ideal. But there was a sense of joy and positive energy coming from the crowded tent where people had gathered to sing and listen. I tracked down Logan Mills who is the current President of Christian Surfers and was amazed to hear that they had been coming here for 30 years this Easter!

So here's what Logan had to say...

How long have Christian Surfers been gathering at Ōākura for Easter?

The Easter Camp at Ōākura was started back in the 1995 by Nev Wells a local chicken farmer. It's been running ever since! We're incredibly grateful to the team at Ōākura Beach Holiday Park for hosting us all these years. So this year was our 30th year coming here for the Easter weekend.

Is your group nationwide?

Yes, Christian Surfers is a nationwide movement! Right now, we have 21 local groups spread across the country, each gathering weekly to surf and serve their local communities. These groups reach all different ages — from 8-13 year-old groms, to high schoolers, young adults, mums and bubs groups, and our old salts crew. It's truly for all ages!

How far do people travel to attend?

We had people come from as far as Christchurch this year, which was epic! It's a big mission, but they made it happen.

Is there a particular reason you chose Ōākura? I'm guessing the surf?

Yeah, right from the start, the Taranaki crew picked Ōākura to kick things off. One of the best things about Taranaki is that it can handle a lot of surfers — there are heaps of different surf spots, not just one or two. Surfers generally prefer less crowded waves, and we're always mindful not to upset local surfers. We're super grateful to the Taranaki community for welcoming us each year!

What's the age range of attendees? Lots of families involved?

Absolutely — we've got everyone from babies to surfers in their 70s! It's a real family atmosphere. Anyone is welcome, no matter your age, surf ability, or faith background. It's an open, welcoming community for everyone over the Easter weekend.

What's the main purpose of the gathering?

The heart behind it all is to bring surfers together from across New Zealand to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus — the foundation of our faith. During the day, people explore the stunning Taranaki coastline, then gather in the evenings for live music, a speaker, and community time.

We also run a surf comp, a skate comp, fun games, and create space for real, authentic connection. It's such a rad weekend — open to anyone keen to join!

Anything else you'd like to say to the people of Ōākura?

A huge thank you to the Ōākura community for sharing your beautiful home with us! We feel incredibly blessed by your hospitality. We'd love to invite anyone from the local community to come along next year — no matter your surf skills or beliefs, you're so welcome. Thanks again, Ōākura!

Ngā mihi nui - Kind regards

Logan Mills
National Director - Christian Surfers New Zealand

Mobile: 0220493620
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Thanks Logan for your kind words and open invitation to our community. See you next year.

Elaine Jamieson



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An impression of the proposed walkway around the Ahu Ahu headland

Correction to article - The Oakura Post, May 2024, page 6

The article stated Hauranga was one of the largest pa in the Tataraimaka district and is recognised as an important boundary marker between the Taranaki tribes to the south and Ngati Te Whiti to the north.

Correction statement: Hauranga Pa is within the tribal area of Ngati Tairi. Information related to Oakura area could be checked for referencing with the Trustees at Oakura Pa.



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Playing to an appreciative audience at the end of year concert for 2024 are L-R Al McDougall, Allan Day, Tim Costelloe, Lois Sibsten and Ange Lawn.

Learning to play ukulele created new friendships

Two years ago, to lure prospective students to his new Ōākura Ukulele group, music tutor Tony Hansen organised his New Plymouth pupils to perform a ukulele concert outside an Ōākura cafe.

Tony's 'pied piper' marketing ploy worked on Ange Lawn who was in her home office when she became distracted by music. "I followed the tunes up my driveway where I could see a group of people playing the ukulele and singing on the street. I was so inspired by the beautiful music, the next day I bought a ukulele and signed up for Tony's classes at Butlers Pub."

To further demonstrate the joyful sound of ukulele and to entice new pupils, Tony and his New Plymouth students also played for The Ōākura Morning Talk Coffee group. Although she organised the mini concert for Tony to play, Tracey Lusk unexpectedly became enchanted by the ukulele too, "And that's how I began

learning ukulele – Tony's New Plymouth group sounded awesome that day, and I wanted to learn and be a part of the ukulele buzz!"

Tony, who has a fun and enthusiastic approach to teaching, says the ukulele is the easiest stringed instrument to play as it only has four strings. "It's quite magical – as people can pick it up and play relatively quickly." Tony also teaches four other ukulele groups in New Plymouth. Lois Sibsten, a ukulele teacher who fills in for Tony at times, complements Tony's teaching style with her encouragement and humour.

Elaine Jamieson had never played a musical instrument prior to picking up the ukulele and enjoys how quickly she has been able to progress in the Ōākura ukulele group. "I think it's special to be able to play a musical instrument. And the ukulele is such a happy sounding instrument - I love how it brings people together."

For some group members, including Tim Costelloe, brain stimulation is a key benefit of learning ukulele. "I wanted to challenge my cerebrum by learning something new. And it also sounded like a lot of fun to sing and play at the pub with a group of people!"

'Brain Gym' was also a reason for Cathy to begin playing. "I am retired now, so learning to play the ukulele is a great way to keep my brain stimulated and to meet new people".

Al McDougall first learnt the ukulele when he was 5 but gave it up after several years. "I hadn't gone near a ukulele for 50 years because I thought they were uncool." But Al became curious when he heard about Tony's Ōākura group lessons. "I jumped at the chance to stretch myself, learn new skills and to play in a group. And Tony has certainly shown me how cool the ukulele actually is! I enjoy finger picking and the variety of songs has enabled me to progress. Playing in the Thursday Ōākura ukulele group is certainly a highlight of my week!"

Socialising and purpose were a key driver for Maria who began playing ukulele in New Plymouth after her husband passed away. Maria enjoys the social aspect of the Ōākura ukulele group, but she also embraces the delight that the ukulele and music provides her.

Linda Le Fleming, joined the newly formed ukulele group when she moved to Ōākura to meet people. "Everyone comes with different musical talents, some are amazing singers, and some are talented at playing instruments. It is a non-judgmental group who are now my friends, and we make beautiful music together. It is so fun, I would call it joyous!"

There are now 15 members playing on Thursdays in Ōākura - and the happy hum of the group has also encouraged people to come out from New Plymouth to play. The group have progressed in skill and performed a concert prior to Christmas, captured in a video by Bryan Vickery and available for viewing on [Taranakimediaarchive.co.nz](https://www.taranakimediaarchive.co.nz) under the heading 'UKULELE OAKURA ENTERTAIN AT BUTLER'S REEF 2024'.

If you wish to give ukulele a go, contact Tony for further details on taranakitonyhansen@gmail.com

Research and interviews Cam Murray





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New Footbridge nears completion.

Following up with the NPDC on progress on this new footbridge, here's the latest:

- The new footbridge and pathway around the Hauranga headland is scheduled to be open around mid-June. The path goes from the Weld Road car park to the new bridge over the Whenuariki Stream. The ramps and handrails on the new bridge were built with help from seven Taranaki students in the Build a Bridge training programme, a partnership of NPDC, WITT Te Pūkenga and the building industry.
- The new bridge goes over the Whenuariki Stream, as a replacement for the bridge that was washed away in a storm in early 2022.
- Cyclists will be asked to walk their bikes when using the walkway.

NPDC's Infrastructure Project Manager Nigel Wilson

Local Wahine smash Masters Surf Comp.

The Easter Masters Surf Competition was held over Easter weekend. The competition, run by New Plymouth Surfriders Club, in its 31st year, attracts 100 surfers from around New Zealand and is held at surf spots around the Taranaki coast.

Local wahine Brooke Lean, Ange Lawn and Rosalind McFetridge competed, with Rosalind taking out the Women's 40-49 years and Women's plate division and Brooke Lean winning the Open Women's Longboard and placing in the Women's 40-49 division. Ange Lawn



placed 3rd in the Open Womens Longboard.

Ange said it was the second year she has done the competition and enjoys the social side. "It's a super fun event and although everyone is there to surf their best, there is a lot of emphasis on catching up with friends and making new mates too."

All three are involved in Ōākura Boardriders Wahine Waves, the learn to surf programme for adult women. Ange says, "It's a such a fun group of events to run - lots of smiles and laughter in the water! We love to see women being supported in the water and having the confidence to try surfing. Also, all of us Wahine Waves volunteers have formed wonderful friendships with each other too - like minded women with the same goal of enabling women in the water!"

Photo: Brooke Lean and Ange Lawn (right) - credit John Quilter





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Stories of the Past

As shared by Len Jury

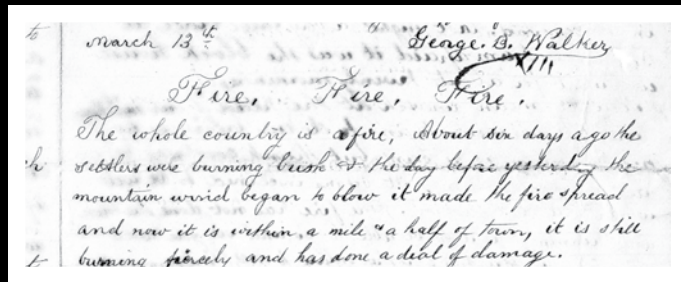
Fire, Fire, Fire.

Fire, Fire, Fire.

From letter written by George B. Walker. (soldier)
New Plymouth March 13 1867

"The whole country is afire. About 6 days ago the settlers were burning bush and the day before yesterday the mountain wind began to blow. It made the fire spread and now it is within a mile and a half of town. It is still burning fiercely and has done deal of damage. I went to the bush last night, it was magnificent to see, first one tree was in a flame then the sparks flew to another and that was flaring. The fire came through the bush like wildfire. This morning my brother went out to milk and found the field his cattle were in, in flames. He pulled down a piece of fence and drove them into town quickstep. If he had been one hour later he would not found one of them. The fire has spread in length between 30 and 35 mile from Urenui in the north to Oakura in the south. At Omata it ran from the bush to the sea destroying everything before it. The fire burnt Potatoes that were in the ground.....

Letter abridged to just particulars of the fire.



Omata Hotel – burnt to the ground.

News report - Taranaki Herald newspaper, per Papers Past.
March 14 1888

About 11:30 on Tuesday night, the hotel at Omata, occupied by Richard Julian was burned to the ground. The inmates, the licensee, his wife, one grown up son and two grandchildren having barely enough time to escape from the burning building, which was enveloped in flames when they were alarmed, with what they could snatch up to save, on account of the high gale of wind that was blowing at the time, which, of course made this flames spread with wonderful rapidity. The origin of the fire is unknown, the only surmise being that it originated somewhere near the kitchen fireplace from live ashes left in it. Mr. Paul had a long lease of the place and had it insured for £200. Part of the furniture belonged to Mr. Julian but there was no insurance on it or the stock. Several neighbours lent all the aid they could at the fire and giving shelter to the burnt-out family, who lost all they possessed. The conflagration was seen in town by Constable Roche, who went to the top of Marsland Hill to see what it was. He thought it was a bush fire. (wording as in the article – article slightly abridged)

Fire, Wooden Home, Omata.

A wooden home, owned and occupied by Mr. T. Harrison, senior, was totally destroyed by fire on Wednesday morning last. The house is situated on a farm on the Hurford Rd. In the Omata district. Mr. Harrison and his wife were away at the time, But a grown up son and daughter were at home. It seems that the fire in the kitchen was driven

up the chimney by the wind, and ignited the shingles, on which it took so firm a hold that all attempts to subdue it was rendered futile. The building was insured for £100 and furniture for £50, but Mr. Harrison's loss is considerably over this, as he lost almost everything there was in the house. (About 1 km from Hurford Rd Corner – L J)

Fright - Big Fire – 2000 bales of hay. Oakura. Feb 4 1962

"I am just getting over the fright we had with the big fire. You have no idea what it was like, if the fire brigade had been quarter of an hour later the house would have gone. I never want to see men fight a fire again. Some of the poor souls had their pyjamas on and a big coat. The brigade was here in 10 minutes after Charlie Price rang. One man got on top of the house and used a big hose, the others were at the shed. The fire started at 1:00 that morning. Myrt saw a light and jumped out of bed and looked out the window and called "the hay is on fire". Even Doris heard the siren, home up Koru Rd. The Fire brigade was here till 10:00. Men came from everywhere.

Fancy people putting a match to a stack (of hay). The police were out pretty quick too and have been here nearly every day since. There was over 2000 bales of hay in the shed. There is still a big smoke out here." Aunt Kate. (Letter abridged).

New Plymouth Fire Brigade took only 7 minutes to reach house fire at Omata and the watch ticked on Waireka Rd/Sutton Rd., Omata, Easter 1965

A century old house destroyed by fire. Resident Mr. C Harris, his wife, and daughters 2 yrs and 4 months and two trapped young men escaped the fire. Mr. Harris cut his arm breaking a window which allowed two young men to escape. The Fire Brigade from alert arrived seven minutes later. The Television set melted in the fire and damaged Mr. Harris's watch case and the case of the Clock. Only Mr. Harris suffered injury which included hair singed as he tried to retrieve family items.

Fire destroys unique art collection.

Omata, January 21, 2014 (Taranaki Daily News – Papers Past).

The Omata home of John and Linda Matthews was completely destroyed by a fierce blaze which began around 12:30 am.

Also lost in the fire was their contemporary art collection, considered to be one of the most significant in the country. Collected over the last 50 years the collection Included works commissioned especially for their home. The Taranaki Daily News reported the collection included works by well known artists such as Ralph Hotere, Colin McCahon, Tony Formison, Don Driver and Michael Smither. Sculptural works by the likes of Barry Brickell, Len Castle and Max Gimlett were also lost.

Mr. Matthews has speculated that the fire may have been started by the overheating of a neon sculpture. Although the house was well equipped with smoke and motion sensors as well as external high pressure fire hose system, the blaze was so fierce initial attempts to quell the fire proved fruitless. By the time the fire brigade arrived their efforts were limited to ensuring the blaze did not spread to nearby vegetation.

The above have been copied as written by a newspaper reporter of the time or from letters held in private collections.



Life Lessons from Life Education

By Charlotte Connolly and Charlot Fisher

Each year our school has the Life Education bus and Harold visit to teach us about important life skills. Every class learns different life lessons to keep them healthy and safe.

Megan Lilly, the Life Ed facilitator, explained that we need to eat a variety of foods from the four food groups: proteins, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, and grains. "It was fun to learn about different foods and what they do to your body," said Ozze Fisher. Some foods are considered treats, like Fruit Bursts, gummy bears, and jelly beans. These shouldn't be eaten all the time—just on special occasions.



Ōākura School

On May 1st, the Year 7/8 students went on a snorkeling trip to Ngāmotu Beach in preparation for their upcoming end-of-year camp at Goat Island. Located in the Hauraki Gulf near Auckland, Goat Island is New Zealand's first and oldest marine reserve. During the trip, the students explore the diverse marine life of New Zealand hidden beneath the surface. Students discover everything from octopi to enormous sand dollars, to tiny fish swimming beneath the rocky shoreline. It's an awesome experience for everyone.

We also congratulate one of our teachers at Ōākura School who walked across the stage in Auckland last week to receive her PhD. Massive congratulations to Dr Lynley Stringer for achieving such a huge milestone.

"I liked learning about all the healthy foods that help your body," added Lewis Vincent.

When we go shopping, it's important to check the ingredients in packaged foods, especially looking out for fats, salt, and sugar. Eating healthy helps us have a calm "owl brain" for learning, instead of a wild "monkey brain."

We also learned about how to deal with problems. Responding calmly can help make a problem smaller, while reacting quickly can make it worse. "When we were with Harold, we learned what's right and wrong to do when there's a problem," said Zoe Connolly. We talked about being kind to everyone, not just our friends, and that having integrity means doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.

Megan and Harold taught us about the acronym WITS, which helps us deal with tricky situations. It stands for Walk away, Ignore, Talk to someone, and Say an "I" statement. Using our wise owl brain helps us think before we act, so we can make better choices. Remember—our words are powerful!

The younger classes learned about how the brain works. "It was fun learning which parts of the brain control different things. Like how the left side of the brain controls the right side of the body," said Zoe Perks. We also discovered that the brain has about 100 billion brain cells! That's a lot—but even though whales have around 500 billion brain cells, humans are still much smarter.



The Ruru class of year 7/8 spent time learning about drugs in vapes and medicine. We found out that nicotine is the most common drug in vapes, and it's very addictive, which makes it hard to stop once someone starts. Vapes were originally made to help smokers quit smoking. Did you know that 80% of people who smoke or vape wish they had never started? Vaping is a worldwide problem. It can lead to lung cancer, and even people nearby can be affected by secondhand smoke.

A big thank you to Megan and Harold for teaching us such important lessons that we'll remember as we grow up.

"Practice when it's easy so it's easy when it's hard." – words of wisdom.

Coming Up

June

17 Y6 Swim Safety at the Aquatic Centre (3 days)

19 Puanga 6:30am

20 Matariki holiday

27 Term 2 ends

July

14 Term 3 begins

17 Y7/8 Indoor Bowls



Written by Heath Luis Reyes Lam & Jesse Tscheuschler.

Images from Lynley Stringer & Renee Nightingale.



Emily

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Art Classes - 1-12 yrs

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Bowling and Social Club

Bowling tournaments September through to April. Both mid-week and weekend games. Steve Muller 021 169 5863

Oakura Bowling Club Mahjong Group

We meet each Monday from 1pm at the club. All welcome including beginners. For more information contact Heather 021617894

Dancing in the Dark

Glenys Farrant 027 753 0120

Golf - Practice net

Non members welcome. Clubs and balls can be supplied. \$5.00 WEDNESDAYS. Casual competition for non-members. 8am to 1pm open to everyone. Denise 752 7665

Indoor Bowls

Enquiries to Marvin Clough 752 7531

JKA Karate - Jim Hoskin 752 7337

Justice of the Peace - Lynn, Anne, John, Krys. Ōākura Library Thurs 10am-12.30pm.

Kaitake Ranges Conservation Trust

Pete Morgan 027 372 5182
morgpt@xtra.co.nz

Kaitake Social Netball - Sundays 3pm during Term 2 & 3 Oakura School Netball Courts Contact Jenna 027 489 4929.

Morning Talk - coffee group

Thursdays 10-11am at NPOB Surf Club. Free tea/coffee. Tracey Lusk 752 7875

'Move it or Lose it' - Strength and Balance Fitness Classe

- Ōākura Hall, Wednesdays and Fridays 9.30am. Contact Gloria Zimmerman 027 284 9111

Mini Groovers - Music Group

All parents welcome with babies/under 5's. Every Tues during term time 10-11am at the Ōākura Hall. Visit their Facebook page: Mini Groovers - Ōākura.

Ōākura Maimoa Club - after school care

Monday to Thursday 3pm to 5.30pm Bookings essential through Facebook @oakuramaimoaclub or by text to 022 323 7210

Ōākura Crop Swap - 3rd Saturday 3-4pm

Ōākura Village Hall. Contact Adam Harris adam@frankandfearless.com

Ōākura Walking Talking Group

Every Monday 10am. Meet in the carpark next to the skatepark on Messenger Tce. Phone Mae 027 314 2995 or just turn up.

Pickleball Ōākura

Ōākura Hall - Tues 9.15am, Wed 7.30pm, Thurs 9.15am. All skill levels welcome and equipment is provided. Elayne 027 937 7173 or Vincenza 027 739 6574

Playcentre

14 Donnelly St. Sessions run Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 9am - noon during school terms. oakura@playcentre.org.nz

Pony Club Tracey Mackenzie 027 319 0238 traceymackkyle@gmail.com

Pool Club - Meets every Wednesday night

7pm over winter commencing April at Butlers Reef. All welcome. For more info call Margaret 027 232 1899

Probus Club - Meets once a month at Ōākura Bowling club rooms on the 3rd Friday of every month 10-11.30am. Contact Brenda Ryan 757 3537 or 027 748 9698

Running for Kids - TempoFit Kids breakfast run club every Friday 8am before school at Ōākura Hall, 8-13yrs. Hayden Shearman 027 483 5942 tempofit.org

St James Church - Sunday Service every 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month, 10am

Strength & Balance - Ōākura Hall, in the supper room (school term only). Monday 10:30. Jane 06 752 7743

Sunday School - St James Church

Every 2nd and 4th Sunday 10am. stjamesoakura@gmail.com

Surf Lessons - Deken Waves Surf Coaching. Group & Private sessions available. Contact Simon: 021 122 9525 dekenwaves@gmail.com

Te Reo Māori Lessons

Toni 021 661 912 thowison@hotmail.com

Tennis Club - Coaching for all ages and levels. Enquiries - Jackie 027 673 2900

The Coastal Dippers - Mon-Fri 7.00am, Sat & Sun 8.00am. Turn up in front of the Surf Club for a quick sea dip. Facebook or Kama 027 769 1101

Tai Chi Classes

Every Monday 9-10am at Ōākura Hall. Judi 027 268 2601. Just come along or contact: taranakitaichichuan@gmail.com

Val Deakin Dance School - Ōākura Hall

Adult ballet class on a Friday morning at 9:15am, ask us about adult Tap classes. val@valdeakindance.org.nz 752 7743 or text 027 694 0933

Tataraimaka Hall

5 Elements Fitness Bootcamps and Kickboxing Fitness classes

Monday to Thursday 5-6 pm, Barney 027 752 7076 barney@5efitness.com or visit www.5efitness.com

Gymnastics Group for children - 5-7 yrs

Tuesdays after school at the Tataraimaka Hall for basic level gymnastics sessions. Rose at rosem@realfoodnutrition.co.nz

Okato

Okato Community Church meeting

At Hempton Hall on Sunday mornings 10.30am - all welcome. Contact Nicky 027 497 3764

Okato and District Historical Society

Meg Cardiff 752 4566

Okato Lions Club - Contact Colin Tyler 027 5421853

- Meet at Hempton Hall first Wed of the month.

Okato Squash Club - Monday nights from 6.30pm. All welcome. Ladies morning begins Term 2 - Wednesdays 10.00 - 11am. Rachel 020 4092 5243

Okato St. Paul's - Sunday Service every 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month, 10.00am

Mid-week open church - Pew for You, every 3rd Wednesday of each month, 4.30pm-6.00pm, okatocp@gmail.com

Te Ruru Market - crafters, growers and makers. Wednesdays, Hempton Hall, Okato, 3-4:30pm

Ōkato Tennis Club okatotennis@gmail.com

TOP Information

The Ōākura Post

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Return of Ōi to Ōākura coast in the balance

Ōi or grey-faced petrel are attempting to return to traditional nesting sites along the coastal cliffs north and south of Ōākura. If you've been out after dusk recently, you may have heard their distinct high-pitched whistles and low 'oor-wii' moans. During April and May they have been displaying to find a mate and prospecting for burrows in the crumbly coastal soils around Ōākura. Excitingly, this year there appear to be relatively high numbers of ōi prospecting along the local coastline. Ōi love areas of vegetated cliffs and headlands to nest. They use the uplift created by wind on the cliffs for take-off and landings.

These ground-nesting birds are extremely vulnerable. Disturbance by dogs, cats, introduced predators and humans all threaten their return to historic breeding grounds. Once chicks hatch, they remain in the burrow from August – January, and are especially at risk while the parents are away at sea fishing for days at a time.

"This is a great tohu - community trapping is helping with the return of these manu. We need to keep it up, be responsible pet owners and give these manu a chance," said Tāne Manukonga, Kaiwhakahaere of Te Ara Taiao education programme.

What can we do? Make an effort to keep dogs on leads when near coastal vegetation and bush around Corbett Park, Ōākura coastal path and Ahuahu beach. Keep cats in at night, and trap for introduced predators.

"This is super exciting, we're seeing more Ōi than ever before near Ahuahu Beach and Corbett Park. Sadly, we've also been finding more dead adult birds. Ōi will be even more vulnerable once they start nesting and it will require the whole community on board to keep them safe," said Dr Emily Roberts of Te Whānau Toroa, Wild for Taranaki.

Students from Ōmata School have been learning about local sea and shorebirds with Wild for Taranaki and Te Ara Taiao. Students have visited Tapuae Marine Reserve to learn about these threatened birds, their habitat and the threats. Using this knowledge, they have been advocating for protection. Legends!

The return of Ōi would help to bring back ecological balance to our coastlines through nutrient cycling – those rich seafood diets and



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guano deposits played an important part in maintaining our healthy coastal forests.

Did you know? Ōi were significant as a food resource for Māori.

Photo credit: Sean Lee

Artwork credit: Ōmata School students



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