

the Ōākura Post

MARCH 2026

Ross Bennett New Deputy Chief Fire Officer

The Ōākura Volunteer Fire Brigade is pleased to announce the appointment in December 2025 of Ross Bennett as Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Ross has been a dedicated member of the Ōākura brigade since 2006, supported throughout by his wife Maryanne and their daughters who have long been part of the wider brigade family. Over the years, Ross has built strong operational experience and has become a familiar and trusted presence within the Ōākura community.

Known for his calm leadership, practical approach, and commitment to serving others, Ross embodies the values that underpin volunteer firefighting. His appointment reflects the confidence our brigade has in his ability to support both our firefighters and the wider community during emergencies.

We congratulate Ross on this well-deserved appointment and look forward to his continued service to the Ōākura community.

Manaka,
Ōākura Brigade



Coastal Young Farmers:

for those aged 16-31 with any connection to farming (even if it's just that you like farm animals)

When Carlos Reid's neighbour told him about the Coastal Young Farmers and encouraged him to join, he thought it would be a good idea. "After you're out of school, there aren't many opportunities like this to meet people with a common interest." Carlos milks cows and is now Chair of the group.

Rhi Whalen is Vice Chair. "when I moved to the area I joined as a way to get to know people." Rhi is an Agri Relationship Manager [rural bank]. "I like talking about cows. My partner and I have a lifestyle block in Okato."

Coastal Young Farmers is a group of young adults who have a connection to farming. I learned about them when someone told me that they could pick up bales of hay for me from a grower on Plymouth Road, deliver AND STACK them in my shed, all for a koha. Members do that sort of thing and use the koha to support their social events. After looking at my shed stacked with hay, I wanted to tell the rest of Ōākura about this great group.

The group is about 50% men and 50% women. They are milkers, a rural banker, people live on a lifestyle block, farmers, and ag (agriculture) contractors that drive tractors and other large farm machinery (those big creatures that sometimes hold up traffic). You can join if you just like farm animals. Members stretch from Ōmata to Ōpunakē with some who live in Ōākura.

They are all part of NZ Young Farmers, a non-profit organisation focused on connecting, nurturing, and empowering young people throughout communities. They showcase how others are farming and provide leadership and development opportunities. In addition to Coastal there are four other Young Farmer groups in Taranaki: Urenui, Inglewood, Central and South.



Their main objective is social time for anyone who has an interest or a connection to farming and is between the ages of 16 - 31. "Once a week we do something social, with our club alone or with one of the other clubs."

They raise money mainly by picking up and delivering bales of hay for people. They also cover silage pits for farmers. For those unaware as I was, the silage is put in a pit and the whole area then gets covered with tyres. It's labour intensive.



They also do other community-minded things such as hosting community dinners. They enter a float in the Christmas parade in Ōkato every year and have won 3rd place for the past two years. They are open to considering any group that asks for help with a project.

Rhi talked about the annual Young Farmers' Ball. "It's a good excuse to get dressed up and have a lot of fun. There's usually a band and a photographer." That's where some of the koha they earn is spent.

Every year there's a national competition for Young Farmers with \$100,000 worth of prizes. It is a contest designed to identify and celebrate the top young farmers that highlights their skills, knowledge, and leadership in agriculture. The grand finals this year will be in Taranaki on 2nd - 4th July at the NP Race Course. It's open to the public and free to just show up for the daytime competitions. In the evening the winner gets crowned 'The Young Farmer of the Year'. It's a prestigious event and the evening dinner and ball requires booking.

While the Young Farmers organisation is new to many of us, 2026 marks the centennial year reunion for Young Farmers. It will be held 3rd July at the Stratford War Memorial Hall. If you, or anyone you know, has been involved with Young Farmers any time in the last 100 years, they have an open invitation to attend the celebration.

The Coastal Young Farmers meet the second Thursday of each month at Butlers. I went along to a recent meeting with about 20 members in attendance. You couldn't find a more welcoming, friendlier group of people. I met Paul Sharpe who has been a member since this group got started in 2011. When he passed the 31 years upper age for membership, they made him a 'Life Member' so he could stay on.

More information about joining is on their Facebook page or you can drop in at one of their Thursday evening meetings. The Coastal Young Farmers are keen to grow their group with new members.

For further information contact Carlos at 1380@gmail.com

Elayne Kessler



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Manaka, Volunteer Fireperson

I asked Manaka to share her story of being a volunteer firefighter at our local Ōākura brigade

How long have you been a volunteer firefighter?
Nearly 8 years.

What attracted you to volunteering at the Ōākura fire station?

I moved here 4 1/2 years ago, so I transferred from my old brigade, and being a volunteer instantly gave me a community. So it really helped give me a sense of belonging when I didn't know anyone. When I originally joined with my old brigade, it was from a desire to help support my very rural community which relied on us heavily for not only fires, but medical, farm and car accidents and scrub fires.

What type of training have you had to undertake?

You begin your training within the brigade on Monday nights and once your training officers find you confident enough, you head off to do a one week recruit firefighter course. It's quite a gruelling week, one that challenges your mental and physical capacity, but if you dig in you'll find you're more than capable! Once you've passed this, you can turn out to calls and put the hard work to practise. Since then I've worked my way up to Senior Firefighter and this year I plan on getting my class 2 license so I'll be able to eventually get behind the wheel.

What happens on a Monday night training session?

Training can vary, sometime we will be pumping water from makeshift dams, practising "making entry" to a burning structure (don't worry, we

just use smoke machines), upskilling our first aid response, BA wearing (when you see us in full firefighter ppe with masks and cylinders on) or search and rescue. We are incredibly lucky to have a crew that is enthusiastic and incredibly competent, so training is always based around keeping those core skills fresh.

How often are you on call-out?

Last year we had 63 calls and I responded to approximately 60% of those calls. A call-out can be anything from 15 mins to 2-3 hours, so when you jump into action, you do have to be prepared to reschedule your plans.

What is the best thing about volunteering for you ?

It's always been about helping people. On someone's worst day, you can be the little bit of calm in the chaos.

Note: To become a volunteer firefighter in New Zealand, you must be at least 16 years old (with parents permission), be a citizen/resident (or have a 2+ year work visa), and live or work within roughly five minutes of a station. The process involves police vetting, a medical check, a practical interview/evaluation, and attending weekly training sessions. You need to be a team player, possess a reasonable level of fitness, show resilience and determination and be able to respond to calls at all hours.

Elaine Jamieson

www.fireandemergency.nz/work-or-volunteer-for-us/volunteering/what-it-takes-to-volunteer/

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STAPLES RODWAY

2 the Ōākura Post the Ōākura Post 3

Ōākura Bowling & Social Club

Club Championships



Congratulations to Peter Radich, Rex Wright, Roy Phillips and Sam Sutherland in winning the coveted and hotly contested Men Championship Fours. The Radich quartet played the more consistent bowls in the blustery conditions, claiming a 25 – 15 win over Jim Priest, Jim Quay, Rod Smith and Syd Sharpe in the final.

The Women Junior Singles Championship was won by Taranaki Development Rep, Alesha Quay. It was not plain sailing for Quay, who had to pull out all the shots in her arsenal to beat very competitive Michelle Walbank and Kim Masters 21 – 17 in their round robin matches. A great effort from all the ladies.

Sandra Zittersteijn and Heather Lofthouse won the Women Pairs Championship final with a well-earned victory over Kim Marsters and 1st year bowler Janice Radich. It was an even contest early, however with Lofthouse playing excellent lead bowls and Zittersteijn chiming in with several great clutch bowls the duo pulled away to win comfortably 19 - 6.

The Kim Marsters skipped team of Michelle Walbank and Norma Nelio edged out Sandra Zittersteijn, Meagan Breedveld and

Janice Radich to win the Women Triples Championship. The game was delicately poised at 15 – 15 after 15 ends, however the Marsters trio played the steadier bowls over the final 3 ends to win 23 - 15.

Pat Walklin claimed his 1st club title with a strong win in the Senior Men Singles Championship played in windy and drizzly conditions. Walklin overcame a gallant Rex Wright to take the title 21 – 11. It was great to see junior bowlers Geoff Farrant and Wayne Gray playing quality bowls and deservedly reaching the semifinals.

Interclub

The summer interclub competitions are nearing completion with Oakura currently holding 1st place in the Avery and mid-field in the Gilmour Cup.

The Oakura Orcas finished just out to the money in the Saturday Div 1 Pennants, finishing a creditable 4th. The Oakura Sharks finished mid-table in Div 2. This is a strong result for the club as the teams face strong opposition each week from Taranaki's best bowlers.

In the Taranaki Bowls Junior Bowls3five competition, the three teams are well placed to push for finals action over the last four rounds. A fantastic effort from the juniors and very encouraging for the club going forward.

Club News

The club wishes all the best to our representatives in the upcoming NZ nationals.

Barry Watkins, Denise Heaven and Sandra Zittersteijn, Phillip Huwyler in the mixed pairs and Sandra Zittersteijn, Jacki Moeahu, Tina Atkinson-Watt and Denise Heaven in the women fours.

Thanks to all the volunteers who assisted throughout the men's and women's open tournaments. Special mention to greenkeeper Wayne Gray and his crew of merry helpers who turned up each day to set the platform for a wonderful two weeks of bowls.

The underarm bowler



Autumn is nearly here and while cricket and athletics are coming to a close, our winter codes are in full pre-season mode. The Hub space and Corbett are busier than ever with Netball growing fast, Basketball hoping to add a youth team, Football planning on a new development side and Rugby working hard to get a senior team back for 2026.

And in a major coup, Kaitake has secured the Taranaki Bulls vs Wellington pre-season game to be played at Corbett Park on Friday 24th of July. Its going to be a great afternoon out with food and refreshments and top rugby on display right here in Ōākura!

Sunny Sundays have now gotten even better – we have you covered with our new shade sails! They look fantastic and work even better making the Rivermouth patio a great place to relax with friends and the community on a Sunday afternoon from 4pm when the weather is playing ball! Just look for the blue flag at the gate and drop in.

Kaitake Netball Club

KNC kicked off the season in February with our first club muster and AGM. It was fantastic to see such a strong turnout from both returning players and new faces, and we're excited for everything 2026 has in store for our Club.

Looking ahead, our Sunday netball sessions will be back in Terms 2 and 3, starting Sunday 19 April. We'll meet at 3pm for a relaxed social game, followed by a Sunny Sunday drink at the Kaitake Community Sports Hub. If you'd like to join us, get in touch to be added to our WhatsApp group, or check out our Facebook page for more details.

Our Saturday teams are also gearing up for the season, and things are already looking positive as everyone gets back into the rhythm of play. The New Plymouth Satellite Competition begins on Saturday 2 May with the pre-season tournament, rolling straight into the winter competition starting Saturday 9 May. More information on this will be shared soon.

A special thank you to the Toi Foundation for their generous support, helping us outfit our players and provide the equipment needed for our teams to train and compete.

Kaitake FC News: Billy Charlton, Senior Trainings, and Junior Musters

Kaitake FC is excited to officially welcome Billy Charlton to the club as our new Director of Football, with responsibility for coaching the Men's First Team. Billy brings strong football knowledge, a passion for player development, and a commitment to building positive team environments. His appointment marks an important step forward as Kaitake FC continues to grow both on and off the pitch.

Senior Men's trainings will begin on 11th February, running weekly on Wednesday nights at 6:30pm. Our Senior Women's Team trainings will begin on 19th February, also running weekly at 6:30pm. Join in on informal Saturday morning kick-arounds at Corbett Park, starting at 8:30am on 7th, 14th, and 28th February. These sessions are a relaxed opportunity to meet club members, enjoy a kick, and ease into the season.

Our Junior Musters will take place on the following dates:

- Sunday 22 February – 3:00–5:00pm
- Wednesday 25 February – 4:00–5:30pm
- Sunday 1 March – 11:00am–1:00pm
- Wednesday 4 March – 4:00–5:30pm

We are also pleased to offer a Girls Only Muster on Saturday 7 March from 10:00–11:00am, supporting our commitment to growing and encouraging girls' participation in football.

All new and returning players of all ages are warmly invited to come down, join in, and be part of the Kaitake FC community.

As we look ahead to the 2026 season, we would like to sincerely thank our dedicated committee volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes and our sponsors, Cunningham Construction and Webber Building. If you're keen to support our fast-growing, community-centred club, get in touch as we are looking for sponsors for our Senior Women's team and our new U13 Girls Central Development League team. We are also offering Gold, Silver, and Bronze club sponsorships to help fund club expenses.

Head to www.kaitakefc.co.nz for more information or email info@kaitakefc.co.nz

In Recognition

These are my belated but no less heartfelt thanks to everyone that had input into The Ōākura Post 2025. Our graphic designer Emily, ably assisted by Duncan, puts in a tremendous amount of blood, sweat and I'm sure tears - or close to it - to get all the content onto the pages. They make it look so effortless when we get the finished issue.

Elayne reads over all the stories and checks for spelling and grammar. When it is time for this to be done each issue she is ready and waiting, which more often than not, the articles come in dribs and drabs. On top of that she has many connections and never fails to find interesting stories and the people behind them.

Village Vibes updates couldn't happen without Elaine's keen eye for what is happening about town, even the little things that we didn't know we needed to know until we read about them.

The time and effort Len puts into Stories of the Past makes for informative and interesting reading. With each story giving a glimpse into the history of our communities origins, we are so fortunate these accounts are recorded in TOP.

Using his skills as a biographer, Cam researched and wrote about some of our amazing locals. His curiosity about why we are who we are meant the short novel he submitted would have to be reduced to a few hundred words.

To the delivery people who ensure the The Ōākura Post/TOP/The POST gets into the letterboxes and Charlie for uploading the file to the website, it's an integral part of sharing the news and information.

Top Print Printers in Waitara have been involved in printing an Ōākura paper since the days I was co-editor of The Oakura Messenger. Their support and dependability is so important when things go haywire.

Much gratitude and thanks for the financial sponsorship that has been gifted, it makes a huge difference in getting more done. To everyone who has gotten in touch, submitted stories and photographs, or shared their business by way of advertising, it couldn't be done without you.

2025 whizzed by for me and 2026 is going at a swift rate too. Not only are you TOP people you are TOP readers.

Tracey Lusk

Stories of the Past

Zim Mochnacki

Russian Prisoner of War, Polish Riding Academy Instructor, Omata Carpathian Riding School.

Zim Mochnacki was a well-known herd tester in Omata and surrounding districts for twenty-one years, arriving about 1950. He grew up in the Tarnopol (now Tamopil) region of Poland, about 350 kms east of the rugged Carpathian Mountains and now considered Ukraine.

Even in those early years he was very involved in horses, their care, breeding and training, and a riding school for youngsters. As one person in New Plymouth wrote, his love of horses knew no bounds and it thrilled him to see young riders enjoying horses.

Zim, in his early days in Tarnopol, looked forward to the day when he would have his own horses. However, with the outbreak of WW2 he was taken Prisoner of War by the Russian troops invading Poland from the East. The young "fit" males were rounded up and placed in open railway cattle trucks and shipped to a very different countryside "to replace Russian youth conscripted into the (Russian) Soviet Army". They had been given an hour to gather up their clothes and other belongings. They did not know where they were going. Their destination now is reported to have been a prisoner of war camp in Siberia.

They were starved for food and Zim told us that as they travelled through villages, they traded clothes and belongings for food. In the starkness of war, some of the prisoners died of cold and starvation. Eventually on arrival at the prisoners of war camp, they were put to work on farms to produce food for the Soviet soldiers at the front fighting the Germans invading Poland from the West. The villagers and the prisoners were deprived of much food and clothing to meet the needs of the Soviet troops. Zim told the story of how they would smuggle their ration of tobacco to sell to the locals. Once he hid under a street manhole lid to avoid capture when he received the signal of the approach of local police. They traded the tobacco for their necessities of life. These are some of the "stories" I remember.

I was shocked by Zim's experiences, some so ghastly, I could not believe humans could be so terrible to each other. Being young, a little Sunday school boy who was 'wet behind the ears', man's utter inhumanity and depravity to opposing soldiers, civilians and even their own people and troops, was beyond my understanding.

Zim met Wally Hamill (Omata) and Pat Sole (Veale Rd) during the Battle of Monte Cassino.

Poles were released after negotiations between Russia and the Allies. Again, with severe and terrible privations, the Poles travelled through Iraq reaching Persia (now Iran). They were formed into General Ander's Polish Corp. and served with the allied troops (including NZ) in Italy. Zim had the rank of Lieutenant. Wally, Pat and Zim were at one time in the Allies Medical Corps, rescuing wounded allied soldiers and getting them back for medical care. Monte Cassino was a monastery on a mountain top, very difficult to access and, regardless, was under negotiated military protocols not to be used as part of the



fighting. The troops, including New Zealand soldiers, realised they were being fired upon by snipers using the monastery above, and thus the storming of Monte Cassino became vital and entered in the chapters of Anzac history.

After WW2 Polish troops were given the choice of returning to their Polish homeland, then under Soviet control, or a new life in Gt. Britain. Some who had fought against Russian troops on their invasion into Tarnopol decided this was a death sentence. The possibility of repercussions by the communist Russian troops and the Poles, now of communist

persuasion, was too great. Zim, it is recorded, worked on the farm of Sir Winston Churchill in England before coming to New Zealand.

Due to his friendship with Wally and Pat, Zim made his way in about 1950 to New Plymouth. Wally Hamill was "allocated" part of the "Allie" Woods, Omata farm when it was sold. Government regulations at the time decreed farms for sale had to be offered to returning servicemen in the first instance. If the farms were large enough, they were divided into two or more farms. Another part of the Allie Woods farm is now the Corteva Research farm on Sutton Rd off Waireka Rd. This was allocated to Frank Sadler, also a Returned Serviceman.

Back to Zim, he was a herd tester 1950 to 1973. Later, on his herd testing rounds he provided advice on horse health, encouragement and carried out shoeing for local children, including ours. His dream of having his own riding school never died.

Everyone admired Zim for single handedly building his home on the corner of Seaview and Omata Roads. It was basically two rooms, one a bedroom for parents and two small boys. There were a few acres for his horses. One Guy Fawkes night the horses became so frightened they crashed through the fences and disappeared in many directions.

Later Zim bought the farm of Roy Penwarden at the bottom of the Omata Hill. It was known as the Carpathian Riding School. Zim was a mild-mannered gentleman. All his riders remember him with great fondness.

Here are a few excerpts from memories of Zim and The Carpathian Riding School:

– "magical man, magical place, I grew up there" DP

"I grew up there. I lived in New Plymouth 1973 – 6. It was a wonderful place". CBB.

"Yes, great place. Biked out every weekend for the love of horses. Great Memories." DH.

"I lived in Westown. Loved brushing and grooming the horses....."

"The Sunday rides to the Beach [Back Beach] was certainly a great attraction for the riders." Stefan Mochnacki (son).

"Zim and I played many engrossing hours of chess." RG

Later in 1973 it became part of the Riding School for the Disabled. An article by Brenda Hall in the Taranaki Daily News, Nov. 3 1977, is headed "Physiotherapy on Horseback" and "Riding brings mobility to the disabled". The article noted how "Six-year-old, partially deaf, Lee-Anne through learning to ride a horse, is beginning to speak."

Another young lass (10 years old) writes later, with affection, "a sort of utopia, where

independence, fear, excitement, friendship, the distinctive smell of leather and best of all, the ponies". Recorded by Vicki Price

"Every Wednesday more than 40 children and adults who suffered from disabilities such as deafness, poor co-ordination, polio and the aftermath of accidents, some even in wheelchairs, take part at the school."

Riding for the Disabled now have its own base at Whalers Gate, Westown. At this base, Mrs Betty Moore said the riding had helped her greatly. "When you are on the back of a horse, whether you like it or not your back muscles move and it helps balance". Comments made in 1977, "Being part of a group of excited and cheerful children and adults, the enthusiasm improves everyone's abilities and outlook on life."

The SH45 farm, just out of New Plymouth, now sports a tall giraffe. I pass and wish it was of Zim on his Palamino as a fitting tribute, to a great man remembered with affection. His wonderful riding school meant so much to



Zim in the fulfilment of a dream and to young city youth enjoying the exhilaration, and also disabled children and adults who normally would never have the excitement of being with horses. For them it became the ultimate thrill of riding a horse.

Zim died in 1977. At his funeral he was blessed with a Guard of Honour of the Riding School members, past and present, lining the street and some astride Zim's horses.

For further information, offers to help and assistance, contact Halina Sarten, Riding School for the Disabled, 1 Alba St. Whalers Gate. New Plymouth. Website – newplymouthrda.org

References; Vicki Price – Three newspaper articles.

Francine Macilquham, Group Manager for New Plymouth Riding School for the Disabled.

The ready assistance of Mike Gooch and his team at the Research Centre – Pukeariki

To each my sincere thanks.

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Between the flags

Lifeguard News

Mid-week lifeguards have now finished up for the season. Lifeguards will remain on the beach over the weekends right through to Taranaki Anniversary Day, from 1 pm to 5 pm.

Always remember to swim between the flags. If you're swimming outside of patrol hours when flags aren't up, please check the conditions beforehand, never swim alone, and parents—always keep a close eye on your children and stay within arm's reach. The beach environment changes constantly, so stay aware of conditions at all times.

Sunday Junior Surf has kicked back off after a short Christmas break and is going huge! It's fantastic to see so many kids enjoying the

beach. A massive thank you to everyone who helps out—your support is what makes Junior Surf possible.

Oceans Camp 2026 was four epic days for our 10–14 year olds, finishing with the infamous Eliminator. Congratulations to everyone who stepped up to the start line, with all athletes completing the first round. A special shout-out to those who took out the top spots:

Girls: 1st Amelia, 2nd Gabby, 3rd Pippa

Boys: 1st Mase, 2nd Joe, 3rd Rowdy

At the time of writing, some of our Oceans team are packing and getting ready to head off to Papamoa for Oceans. This year we have a strong squad of 30 athletes competing.

Early March sees 12 of our Senior and Masters athletes heading to Ohope Beach for SLSNZ Nationals. NPOB has had a great season with our older crew (14 yrs+), and it's awesome to have a team heading away.

Sunday Sips is also in full swing! Join us every Sunday from 4:30 pm to wrap up your weekend with a beer and burger after a hot day at the beach. Everyone is welcome! Sunday Sips will continue right through to Taranaki Anniversary Weekend.

Take care, stay safe, and enjoy the rest of the summer!

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We met Ana and Karl who shared their fossil story in TOP last year. Now they are excited to host a festival that is for everyone and is free of charge. Taking inspiration from WOMAD which is having a break this year, it is a concept many will be familiar with. Ana tells us more about it.

Taranaki is bursting with creative talent, and this upcoming free event is all about celebrating just that.. the arts, dance and music.. of Taranaki.

From live music and dance performances to art, improv groups and delicious food, the day promises something for everyone. Expect the sounds of drums and voices filling the air. Expect movement, colour and connection. Most of all, expect a welcoming atmosphere where families, friends and neighbours can gather whilst enjoying the beach views from East End Reserve. Children will have plenty to enjoy, making it a relaxed day out for the whole family. Bring a picnic rug, your friends, even your dog, and settle in for an afternoon of local arts.

We want everyone to have the opportunity to experience live performance and local arts.

March 15 at Paris Plage, East End Reserve, New Plymouth 11am - 8pm

This event is made possible through support and sponsorship. If you or your business would like to help we would love to hear from you at blisteredfingersband@gmail.com. We are looking for stallholders for this event, if you are interested email: blisteredfingersband@gmail.com

Event Link:
www.eventfinda.co.nz/2026/local-sounds-festival-2026/new-plymouth



**SUNDAY
MARCH
15TH**

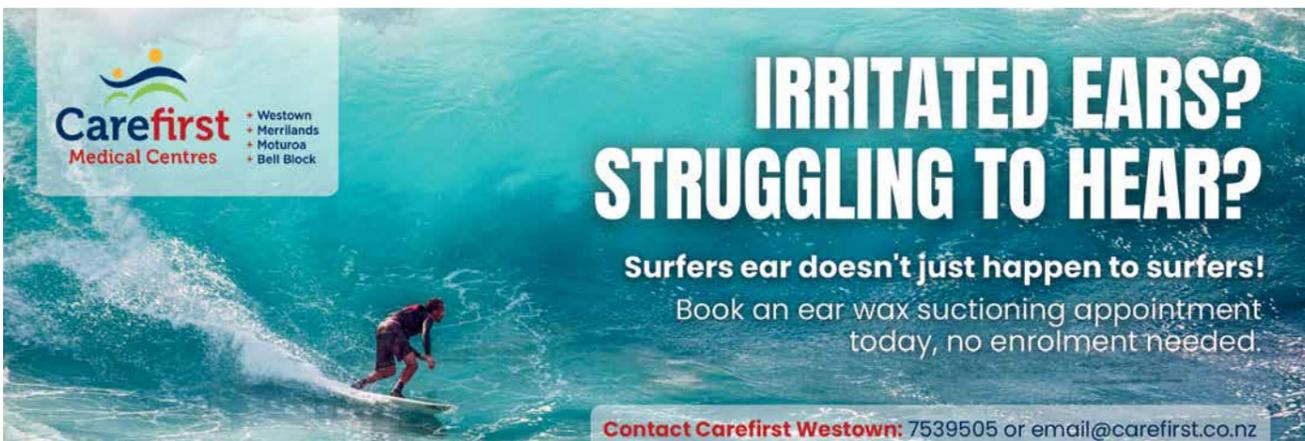
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Introducing our Lead Ambassadors for 2026

Pictured: Ōmata school Lead Ambassadors for 2026. Top - Tyler Hargrave and Harry Hargrave Ground - Olivia Watkins and Florence Wylde.



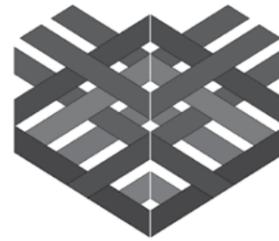
Coming Up

March

- 3 Class Swim Displays
- 4 Class Swim Displays
- 9 Taranaki Anniversay
- 11 Year 1/2 Movement Madness 1pm
- 12 Year 3/4 Movement Madness 1pm
- 25 3D Conferences
- 26 3D Conferences

April

- 1 Y6-8 Swimming Sports at Bell Block Pool
- 2 End of Term One
- 3 Good Friday
- 20 Term Two begins



**TE KURA O OAKURA
OAKURA SCHOOL**



A Fantastic Start to the Year at Oakura School

We have had an amazing start to the new school year! On our first day, we took part in a powhiri to welcome the new tamariki to our kura. It was really exciting and a great way to start the year.

Over the past couple of days we have been getting to know our new teachers. This has been really fun and we are enjoying our new classes. Some of the younger classes have already started swimming, while the years 7 and 8 will have their lessons at the Aquatic Centre.

This year we have also welcomed a new staff member at our powhiri. Dianne is our new office manager. She helps to keep all the teachers and students organised. We asked her some questions to find out more about her:

What do you like about working in the office? I like that it is not boring and everyday is different and I get to work with amazing staff and students.

What's a fun fact about you? I briefly worked in the movie industry, when they were filming The Last Samurai.

How is returning to Oakura School after being a pupil here? It's a lot bigger with more students, but the front still looks the same. We had fireplaces instead of electric heating when I was here.

What is the best thing about your job? Teachers and students. And I love typing on the computer.

What is your favourite school lunch? Sandwiches and fruit. Today I had some ham, egg and rocket on homemade bread. I also like salmon and cream cheese on bagels.

Welcome Dianne, we hope you enjoy your new kura.

It has been a fantastic start to the year and we look forward to keeping you updated on all the exciting things happening at Oakura School.

Written by Levi B and Lola

And TOP can reveal that Dianne was a student from 1978-1982 and the Principal was Mr Eddie Betts.

Kaitake Community Board

We had a great turnout at the February 9 Kaitake Community Board (KCB) meeting. A couple of local people were able to voice their concerns in several areas which need attention and these have now been lodged with NPDC. KCB recognised that Ōkato has been missing out on representation so we are open to their ideas for projects.

A focus of the meeting was a very informative presentation by Wild Taranaki regarding the preservation of the Ōi/Titi bird, otherwise known as the Grey Faced Petrel or mutton bird. These birds have been nesting in the bush above Corbett Park for the past several years,

and most notably for the past two years. This nesting of Ōi is the furthest south that is known.



The nesting colony is under pressure from dogs who find the smell of the fledglings irresistible and have been digging out their burrows. At least five birds have been found mutilated likely by dogs. Camera surveillance has confirmed that dogs are the primary predators.

Wild Taranaki has requested funding assistance from the KCB discretionary fund to erect a dog proof fence in the bush above the playing fields, with two access gates installed to allow people through but not unleashed dogs. This fencing is urgently required prior to the Ōi/Titi nesting season April - May, and then through the infancy period in September. A breeding

pair only produces one egg per year. Both parents are required to feed and support for about five months before the fledgling can leave the burrow.

The KCB agreed that this request is within the environmental portion of our strategic plan and would be a positive use of some of the discretionary fund. We have requested the NPDC projects team to implement a plan for this project. The current KCB discretionary fund is not sufficient to cover the total cost so Wild Taranaki is looking for additional funding. If anyone can help please get in touch with them or any KCB member.

Your input is always valued. Call, email or turn up to our next meeting to have your say, March 16th at 2pm - Corbett Park Sports Hub.

Mike Anderson - chairman

Hi, I'm Margaret Bryce, the Chiropractor who talks about subluxations.

Does your child's body move accurately, or is it a bit clumsy? Your own body?

A subluxation is when your brain has lost control of a spinal segment through some stress or other. It can mess with your body's communication. When your body moves accurately you have fewer accidents. **My examination fee is \$120, but I'm opening 7 exams for \$30 each, which we'll give to World Vision. Call me now.**

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David Macleod MP for New Plymouth

I have three letters for you today. LNG. That little acronym is a big deal for Taranaki, and the country.

Last month the National Government announced it would be building a facility to import Liquefied Natural Gas into New Zealand. With a dwindling supply of indigenous gas, we need LNG to provide energy certainty and security. There is a procurement process for the facility underway, but all the options on the shortlist are based in Taranaki.

It's a smart, logical choice. With our decades of experience in oil and gas and existing infrastructure that can continue to be used, it makes sense to put it here.

It will also be a much-needed shot in the arm for Taranaki's economy. Along with significant Government investment, there will be construction and engineering jobs and work for related industries while an LNG facility is established, and some longer-term operational jobs once it is online.

The thing is, we wouldn't need a boost like this if Labour's oil and gas ban hadn't pushed up energy prices, cut jobs, and increased reliance on overseas coal.

So even though New Zealand is experiencing an electricity generation boom, a rapidly declining gas supply has left our electricity sector exposed. We need to curb dry year risk and make sure we have optionality for when current energy sources can't meet demand. LNG will become an important part of our energy mix. It is a back-up, a fail-safe and will ultimately make sure the lights always stay on.

It is also vital part of the transitional phase we find ourselves in, both

david.macleodmp@parliament.govt.nz
(06) 759 2580
37 Gill Street, New Plymouth

Office hours:
Mon-Thu: 9am-3pm
Fri: By appointment



Authorised by David MacLeod, Parliament Buildings, Wgtn.



regionally and nationally, as we slowly and carefully replace reliance on fossil fuels with cleaner options.

Building an import facility in Taranaki is a critical step to strengthen New Zealand's energy security and support economic growth. It is expected to save Kiwis around \$265 million per annum, or around \$50 per household by reducing price spikes and lowering the risk premium built into power bills.

It is all part of National's plan to fix the basics and build the future.

Cheers, David

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Proud History of Research continues

We're excited to soon be kicking off more groundbreaking predator-free research, right here on the coast! Taranaki Regional Council was recently granted \$1.5 million from the Department of Conservation to carry out predator-free research and development projects over the next three years. These projects will be embedded within the existing Towards Predator-Free Taranaki work.

The first study will look at the effectiveness of three new, high-tech possum detection devices in a low possum environment and compare them to current methodologies. It will be carried out on farmland in the Zero Possum area between Ōākura and Ōkato, where we've removed thousands of possums in the last few years.

One of the devices is HARK, an AI-powered acoustic monitoring system developed by Taranaki's 800 Trust. It identifies animal sounds such as possum calls. The others are two AI cameras made by New Zealand developers Critter Solutions and PF2040. While mainly focused on possums, the research will also test the devices' ability to detect stoats and rats. This will be



the first comparison between them and against existing methodologies in such a low possum environment. Over and above the thousands of predators removed across the region, Towards Predator-Free Taranaki's national contribution has come through testing and sharing learnings with others.

The virtual barrier of traps at Pukeiti was the first large scale trial of new remote reporting technology, while our trial of AT220 traps and

our use of dogs in this landscape are also good examples. The Zero Possum project itself was trailblazing in that it was the first time anyone had attempted possum eradication on such a large scale in this kind of landscape.

The new research could be a game changer for possum control, refining detection methodology across the country and helping to progress understanding of how to remove the last few possums from intensive farmland.

The Zero Possum area will be divided into blocks for the research to be replicated. The new devices may find a possum we have not been able to detect, which is great. But if they don't then we will release a possum into that zone to test the detection device capability.

Finally, a shout out to farmers and landowners in the research area for your ongoing support, it's much appreciated. Follow us on Facebook to keep an eye on how the research is going!

Nick Heslop, Towards Predator-Free Taranaki Programme Lead



Taranaki Taku Tūrangā
Towards Predator-Free Taranaki

SEEN A POSSUM?

Report it at:

www.trc.govt.nz/possum

*Zero Possum area only - between Oakura River and Hangatahua (Stony) River.

Seen one? scan here



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Acing it.

The tennis season had a false start with our first rain off for the season. Here's hoping March will turn on the summer weather!

Congratulations to all the juniors who represented Taranaki recently. U16 won the trophy for their age group and U14 were runner's up.

U12
Collin Faragaso
Charlie Le Prou
Julie Shlosberg
Pippa Farquhar

U14
Luke Barrett
Noah Stanley
Ana Shlosberg
Ziv Carmi

U16
Zac Schoonover

With one more round to play before semifinals, Sofie and A2 have enough points clear to make the playoffs.

The club is running a new social night on Tuesday nights 5.30-7.30pm. Members and non-members are welcome. Come along for some fun games, no commitment, turn up and enjoy some tennis.



Climbing the ladder.

Upskilling and progression is a big part of being in the brigade. This often means taking time away from family and work to be on courses to improve skill levels and progress through the ranks. This ensures the crew remains well trained and that a solid management and command structure is in place.

On that subject, there's been a bit of movement in 25/26 summer and we would like to congratulate Alex Yule for completing his Firefighter course after a patient wait in recruitland. Also we're pleased to see Mark Town move up to a Senior Firefighter position, providing command and control over incidents as well as the exceptional work he does as training officer. And finally, after being vacant for a year, the Deputy Chief role has been filled by Ross Bennett.

We'd also like to extend a farewell to Jannes Reinders who leaves us to attend university. One of our younger firefighters, Jannes showed great commitment during his time with the brigade and we wish him well.



Giraffes Can't Dance is back!

The Val Deakin Dance Theatre will be presenting a repeat season of this popular story – told in narration, dance, mime and music. Colourful, exciting, humorous and interactive, and designed for audiences of all ages, it will be presented at the Val Deakin Dance Centre, 306 St Aubyn Street, on

Saturday, March 14 at 11:30 am and 1:30 pm
Sunday, March 15 at 11:30 am and 1:30 pm.

Tickets are family priced and available online from the Dance Theatre's website www.valdeakindance.org.nz by phone 7580991.

The last season was a sell-out so don't miss the chance to see it this time, or come and enjoy it again. Added in this time – come dressed as your favourite character and really be part of the action. See you there!



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TOP Activities

Ōākura

Ōākura Hall Bookings
Vicky Jury 027 215 2465

Adult Ballet Class - Friday 8:45am - 10 am.
Register your interest for adult tap class.
Jane 027 6940933 or janeroseman@xtra.co.nz.

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. Contact Heather 021617894

Dancing in the Dark
Glenys Farrant 027 753 0120

Gym Classes - Fun & friendly community circuit training sessions at The Well Nest gym Tue 5:20pm & Fri 9:30am. Tempofit.org/gym Hayden - 0274835942

Indoor Bowls
Enquiries to Marvin Clough 752 7531

JKA Karate - Tues 5.30-7pm, Thurs 6-7.30pm. Jim Hoskin 022 601 3070.

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 & Thurs 9-11am, Wed 7.30-9pm, 10am-12pm most Saturdays. All skill levels 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 - Ōākura Bowling club, 3rd Friday of the month 10-11.30am. Contact Brenda Ryan 757 3537 or 027 748 9698

TempoFit Kids Run Club - run club, Friday 8am at Ōākura Hall, 8-13yrs. Hayden Shearman 027 483 5942 tempofit.org

St James Church - Sunday Service 10am, Every week. Sunday School Every 2nd and 4th Sunday 9am Breakfast club & 10am Sunday School. stjamesoakura@gmail.com

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

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 - Children's ballet class. Tuesday 3:30 to 4:30pm. For ages 5-9. Contact janeroseman@xtra.co.nz

Sunday Waves - 5Rhythms Dance Class
SUNDAY 10.30-12 fortnightly - Oakura Hall. Beginners welcome. A fun somatic practice without steps... Mira 02108090172/ Dance5R@mirawatson.com

Dance 5Rhythms
MONDAYS 5-6.30 fortnightly - Corbett Park Hall. No experience needed. A free movement dance practice to increase somatic connection, co-ordination and joy. 02108090172 / Dance5R@mirawatson.com

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

Starts Term 2
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 Bowling Club - Friday Twilight Bowls during Daylight Saving, all welcome. Club opens 5:30pm, starts 6pm. Supper \$6. Sandra 0274662129

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.

St. Patrick's Catholic Church - Saturday Vigil Mass @ 6pm. 36 Cumming Street.

St. Paul's - Sunday Service 10am 1st and 2nd Worship Service. 3rd Sunday 10am - Communion Service, 4th Sunday at 7.00pm. Open church for silent reflection - Pew for You, 3rd Wednesday of each month

Te Ruru Market - Okato Community Market - Crafters, Growers, Makers. Every Wed. Hempton Hall Okato 4-5:30pm.

Ōkato Tennis Club okatotennis@gmail.com

TOP Information

The Ōākura Post
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06 752 7875 / 027 636 8060
editor@theoakurapost.co.nz

Advertising:
advertising@theoakurapost.co.nz
Design/Layout: Emily Bennett
Proof Reader: Elayne Kessler
Views expressed in The Ōākura Post are not necessarily those of the The Ōākura Post

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www.theoakurapost.co.nz | editor@theoakurapost.co.nz

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Toiaa Taiao, detail from
Whiria ko te iwi tūma, 2025



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Alex Monteith
Maree Sheehan



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28 February–
19 July 2026



Image: Debra Bustin standing with her installation, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1982.

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