

# MATARANGI BEACH PAPER



Whangapoua  
Matarangi  
Kuaotunu  
Otama  
Opito Bay  
Te Rerenga  
Wharekaho

## Mana Manu Trust Celebrate their 20th Anniversary

Report by Meg Graeme



The Mana Manu Trust recently had its 20th birthday with members gathering in Whangapoua to celebrate and look to the future.

The Trust was formed in 2006 to coordinate landowners' pest control efforts to enhance the coastal forest and wetland around Whangapoua Harbour between Te Rerenga and Whangapoua.

The chosen name, Mana Manu Trust, was supported by past kaumātua Lucien Mangakahia, so it was extra special having

Wanda Brljevic join us and share some history of Ngāti Huarere. 'Mana Manu' loosely means strength or power to the birds.

The celebration included past and current landowners. Current chair Mary Hamilton says, 'Our volunteers do amazing work and we enjoy the social link the Trust gives us.'

The Trust now covers about 330 hectares as adjacent land has recently been added into the Trust's area. Support from Waikato Regional Council, WWF, DOC, Powerco, and Predator Free Hauraki, Coromandel

Community Trust has helped establish tracks, baiting, trapping, and weed control.

The forest is flourishing with kohekohe—which was dying back in the early 2000s from possum browse—now healthy, multiplying, and providing a winter nectar source for native birds.

Rat numbers were high, and monitoring showed that 60% of monitoring tunnels had rat activity. With constant trapping and baiting by our volunteers, that now varies between 0–25% and 0–10% over the critical

breeding season. Possums are also being suppressed but keep moving in from surrounding land.

Landowners have noticed the increasing bird life and were recently rewarded with a kiwi wandering past a wildlife camera. It is anticipated that kiwi will set up permanent territories in the Trust area, but wild cats and roaming dogs are still an issue.

One of the aims of the Trust is to bring back two flightless birds missing from the area: the kiwi and the North Island weka.

The Trust is also focused on safeguarding the critically endangered Australasian bittern (matuku-hūrepo) in the coastal wetlands. Protecting habitat for this rare bird is an ongoing battle.

Historic wetland drainage has severely reduced their food supply, pushing them to feed in roadside drains where they risk being struck by passing vehicles.

Expanding wetland protection and predator control will be crucial to securing a future for both species. Volunteers around the peninsula are getting ready for another annual Great Matuku Muster beginning in September. The counting of male bittern booms gives an indication of their population.

**Featured: Trustees, community volunteers, and foundational landowners pictured together in Whangapoua last month marking 20 years of coordinated predator control and ecosystem restoration**



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# Bluff Road Breakthrough: Community Board Backing Major Milestone in Connectivity Project

The Mercury Bay Community Board has formally backed a community-led plan to reopen the long-closed Bluff Road coastal connection.

At its August meeting, the board voted to accept long-term ownership and maintenance of a proposed pedestrian and cycling suspension bridge.

This decision reverses over a decade of council stances that had stalled progress due to financial and rockfall concerns.

Previously, the Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) deemed repairs a financial impossibility for ratepayers.

The turning point came by shifting initial construction costs away from the council, balancing public safety against fiscal risk.

Hundreds of pedestrians currently bypass barriers to dangerously use the volatile track below the crumbling cliffs.

Under the new agreement in principle, the board will take full legal ownership of the bridge and track post-construction. The council will absorb ongoing long-term

maintenance costs into future budgets, removing a massive public liability hurdle.

However, backing remains conditional on a comprehensive coastal track assessment and a strict "whole-of-life" cost analysis.

This breakthrough results from a collaboration between the Matarangi Ratepayers and Residents Association, the Kūaotunu Residents and Ratepayers Association, and the Matarangi Community Trust.

Local groups will fund initial construction through fundraising, donations, and infrastructure grants. The proposed suspension bridge will span Bluff Cove, anchoring into stable rock faces to clear volatile slip zones and safely connect Matarangi and Rings Beach.

Authorities remind the public that the route remains strictly closed during ongoing geotechnical testing.

Until completion, the public must use the steeper DOC Matarangi Bluff Walking Track as the only lawful alternative.

## THE FISHING REPORT Matarangi Boat & Fishing Club



Ella Leslie, founder of Jillian Wealth Investments presenting Peter Hazael with his \$50 prize for the July Fish of the Month comp.

Congratulations to Peter Hazael, the July winner for our new Fish of the Month competition, with a land-based caught gurnard weighing 0.418kg. Thank you to Jillian Wealth Ltd for your sponsorship. Check out our website to see the August snapper winner. The fish for September is kahawai ([www.mbfco.co.nz](http://www.mbfco.co.nz)).

We are holding our Annual Prizegiving on 3 October at the Matarangi Fire Station. This year it is a free event, with an earlier start time and food provided.

This is open to all current financial club members and their families. Keep an eye out for an email in early September with full details ([www.mbfco.co.nz](http://www.mbfco.co.nz)).

The next tournament on the club calendar is the Labour Weekend Fishing Tournament to be held on Saturday 24 October 2026. This tournament is open to all, with details to be announced in September.

If you're planning to join us again this season

and haven't renewed yet, now's a great time to do so. Renewal information has already been sent to members by email. For anyone thinking about joining the Matarangi Boat & Fishing Club, memberships for the 2026/27 season are now open ([www.mbfco.co.nz](http://www.mbfco.co.nz)).

You can keep up to date with news on our website ([www.mbfco.co.nz](http://www.mbfco.co.nz)), also our Facebook page and Instagram pages.

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The Whitianga Coastguard can be contacted on VHF Channel 63 and the Now Weather Report is available on Channel 20.

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## The Matarangi Fire Report

This month we have had 4 medicals and one vegetation fire call out. The crews have been outstanding with each event along with many other crew members coming to the station should they be required.

We have a great core of volunteers ranging from Operational support, fire fighters and first Responders.

Among our team we are very fortunate to have two paramedics, always keen to help when needed.

The cadet program is going extremely well. This month there was a combined training with the crew, which I am sure was beneficial to all.

Our AGM is on the 16th September and we

will have an opening for a new committee member. If this sounds like you, please give me a call.

The annual Malcolm Spry Memorial Golf tournament is on the 16th October. This is a 3 person Ambrose format. We also have the Stu Arnold Cup on Thursday 15th.

This is a 9 hole comp where the front 9 all become par 3's. If you wish to be a sponsor of either event, big or small, all is welcome. To enter either competition please contact myself or the Dunes.

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# Menzshed Matarangi



Menzshed Matarangi is one of over 100 Sheds scattered throughout New Zealand. Each has the focus of bringing men together to share tall stories, have a laugh, learn new skills, and contribute to the community. Additionally, more and more Sheds are placing a strong focus on men’s health and wellbeing.

Our shed was formally registered as an incorporated society in 2024, converting a years-old casual remark from local identity, Mark Hall, into reality. A foundation committee—comprising chair Dave Smith, secretary Mark Gaunt, and Mark as treasurer—did all of the hard work to ensure that Menzshed Matarangi was registered and up and running. Mark played a key role in securing a licence to use an old shed, owned by Winton, near the wastewater treatment plant.

Our first few months were spent tidying the area, adding windows, and creating a kitchen space. Workbenches, shelving, and storage space soon followed as we began to get organised and sort through the multitude of tools and equipment that had been gifted.

In fact, almost all of the contents of the Shed have been donated by generous individuals from around Matarangi. More recently, Winton provided us with a water tank, so we now have running water in the kitchen. We have also put a roof on a container that was gifted to us.

The next step is to empty and clean it prior to using it for storage, which will free up

valuable workshop space.

As word got around Matarangi and the local district, we began to tackle small repair jobs for people. Individual members take on tasks and develop new skills at the same time.

Some have been doing repairs to furniture, for instance, while others have been breathing life back into stubborn motors. Many people have gifted non-working items to us, happy for us to sell them for our own funds if we can get them running or repaired. While we are definitely not The Repair Shop, we will always have a go at repairing items if someone has the necessary skills.

The Shed is open each Tuesday morning, and new members are always welcome. Visitors are welcome too, whether it is to seek help for a repair or to gift surplus tools and equipment. From time to time, we also receive materials left over from construction jobs; timber is particularly useful for us.

Up until now, we have spent most of our time getting organised and setting up. However, our current chair, Phil Rule (Weedo), is keen for us to step up and have a go at creating items for sale at the local market. We have a few plans to follow but would always welcome new ideas and suggestions.

Peter Mathias, secretary.

**Featured: Lloyd Clark beginning his next project at the Matarangi Menzshed workshop.**

# Curry Night Quiz



The minds of Matarangi were put to the ultimate test last month at the annual Te Rerenga School PTA Curry and Quiz Night. Held at the Matarangi Fire Station. The highly anticipated evening saw 21 Teams battle it out for academic glory, all while raising over \$1,000 for the local school.

Taking the top spot on the podium was Team Totoro comprising of Clare, Liam, and Azumi, and named after Hayao Miyazaki’s classic 1988 anime film. It was a hard-fought victory, with the Coromandel Area School staff team, Simple Minds—named after the legendary Scottish rock band—putting up a brilliant fight to secure a close second place.

Local trivia master Andy Corles was back at the helm, putting the teams through their paces with a formidable lineup of questions.

The general consensus around the room was that this year’s quiz served up some tougher, curlier questions than last year. However, as

any seasoned quiz buff knows, a few brain-teasers are essential to truly separate the best from the rest.

Beyond the trivia, the night was a culinary triumph. Chef Steve and his legendary kitchen crew, the Kitchen Bitches, dished up another round of awesome curries that kept the crowd energised and satisfied. The smooth running of the entire operation was credited to Petrina and Martin Youl, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to coordinate the event.

The Te Rerenga School PTA extends a massive thank you to the generous local sponsors who donated fantastic merchandise for the raffles and provided an excellent array of prizes.

Thanks to the community’s incredible support, the night was a resounding success, ensuring vital funds go directly back into supporting our local children.

## Local Starman Alastair Attends Spanish Eclipse



You can take Alastair Brickell out of the observatory, but you can’t take the observatory out of Alastair—perfecting his “working holiday” setup to catch last month’s spectacular total eclipse in Valencia Spain. According to Alastair the eclipse lasted 1.5 minutes.

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# Conservation Corner: Matarangi Leads the Way for Peninsula Dotterels as New Breeding Season Beckons



Matarangi has proved once again to be the Coromandel Peninsula’s most important site for post-breeding dotterel (tūturiwhatu) flocks, with recorded numbers climbing well over 100 for both species. As a new breeding season approaches, this winter milestone provides a timely opportunity to consider the great progress made by local volunteers and work towards securing a truly sustainable population for our vulnerable shorebirds. The incredible flock numbers are a direct credit to the relentless predator trapping and dune protection efforts carried out across our local coastlines. However, maintaining this momentum means addressing a dangerous post-summer spike in feral predators. Local conservation groups, including the Rings Beach Wetland Group and Kūaotunu Coastcare, are currently tracking a rise in nocturnal feral cat and hedgehog activity along the sand dunes, which are predators capable of wiping out entire camouflaged nests in a single night.

The primary stronghold for these birds is located at the eastern end of Matarangi Beach and around the dynamic sand spit area, where the wide tidal estuary and open shoreline provide the perfect environment for feeding and nesting. Because dotterels lay their eggs directly on the open sand rather than in trees, they are highly exposed to human disturbance. As nesting adults prepare to lay their delicate eggs in shallow sand scrapes, the community is being asked to step up to ensure the upcoming chicks survive. Property owners are urged to keep domestic cats indoors overnight, while beachgoers must ensure dogs remain strictly on leads around the dunes. By pairing dedicated predator control with mindful beach habits, Matarangi can successfully safeguard its vital status as the peninsula’s ultimate shorebird sanctuary.

The annual breeding season cycle begins with territory scouting in August, when adult pairs develop their distinctive rusty-orange breeding plumage and begin scraping preliminary nests into the sand dunes. Egg laying follows from September through to December, with females laying a clutch of two to three heavily camouflaged, sand-coloured eggs directly on the open ground. This triggers a twenty-eight day incubation period where both parents take turns sitting on the nest for four weeks to protect the eggs from predators and the harsh coastal sun. The critical transition from hatching to fledging takes roughly six weeks, during which the tiny, highly vulnerable chicks leave the nest within a single day to forage alongside their parents but remain completely unable to fly.

Protecting these chicks requires a collective effort, and beachgoers are reminded that keeping dogs securely leashed is paramount. Uncontrolled dogs entering fenced-off dune boundaries can easily crush camouflaged eggs or separate chicks from their parents, leaving them to die from heat exhaustion or starvation. Coastal property owners are also strongly urged to keep domestic cats entirely indoors between dusk and dawn to stop nocturnal hunting along the margins. Finally, walkers should look out for the distinctive injured wing act, which is a clever decoy tactic adult dotterels use to lead people away from a hidden nest or chick, meaning anyone witnessing this behaviour should back away immediately.

# Louise Bradley Secures Top National Real Estate Award



Local real estate salesperson Louise Bradley has achieved the prestigious Executive Performer title for the 2025/2026 recognition year. The award places the Ray White Whitianga & Matarangi agent in the top 12% of salespeople across New Zealand. Ray White corporate leadership praised Louise, noting her strong work ethic and “above-and-beyond” service to clients.

“I am incredibly humbled by this recognition,” Louise said. “For me, real estate has never been just about selling houses—it is about looking after people. To be ranked in the top percentile nationally while doing what I love right here at home is a massive honour.”

Born and raised on the Coromandel Peninsula, Louise originally grew up in Thames. She and her husband, Glenn, moved to Matarangi in 1990 after returning from their overseas experience (OE). At that time, Matarangi was a quiet coastal outpost with only 26 permanent residents.

“Glenn and I fell in love with the lifestyle here immediately,” Louise recalled. “Whether it was diving, fishing, or just walking along the beach, we knew this coast was special. Seeing how Matarangi has grown from those 26 permanent residents to the thriving community it is today has been amazing to be a part of.”

In 1999, the family relocated to Coroglen to pursue an active outdoor lifestyle. They spent a decade raising their three children and co-owning a 100-acre avocado and kiwifruit orchard. Today, they are grandparents to seven grandchildren.

Seventeen years ago, the couple sold their orchard interests. Glenn returned to forestry work in Whangapoua as a supervisor for Ernslaw One, while Louise trained to fulfill her long-held dream of entering real estate. The couple then bought a home and returned to Matarangi.

Over the past 16-plus years, Louise has built a highly successful career helping families secure permanent homes and holiday baches in the area.

“I pride myself on genuinely listening to my clients and going that extra mile to make things happen,” Louise said. “Whether someone is buying their first family bach or selling a treasured permanent home, helping them realise their property goals is what drives me every single day.”

This latest national award joins her regular Premier and Executive status milestones, backed by a long track record of positive feedback from local residents.



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# Ten Years On

Ten Years ago the MBP's cover photo was a male model resplendent with just a sewing machine! Yes it was one of the latest pinups from the Men Not Mining calendar that was a popular local fundraiser for the anti mining cause.

The first Matarangi Master Cook 2016 was crowned and it was none other than our very own Maree Taylor who beat off Neil Tombes, Ros de Coek, Anita Clark, John Rose and Keith Law. Maree was praised by the judges for her winning dishes, a bacon wrapped pork medallion and a 'melt in the mouth' chocolate hazelnut mousse.

The Grand Finale had champagne flowing, canapés and live music and was a perfect setting for the big announcement. For nearly two months six home cooks each took a turn and competed in the culinary affair, serving a two course meal for sixty diners. Attending the event was highly sought after, with a waiting list each week. It really brought the whole village together and we would love to see it return!

The wine club was another past event that was also in full swing in September 2016. Bringing like minded locals together the wine tastings, particularly during the winter months, was a great way for locals, newcomers and holiday makers to mix and mingle. Another social activity that would be great to reinvigorate!

The late Paul Kelly, a man who made a huge contribution to our community was the good sort of the month. Paul was the chairman of our local community board and was known for always looking for ways to improve our seaside towns and for that the community was grateful. Next time you are down at the Village Green have a sit at the table in memory of Paul and pay him some gratitude. His contribution to our community should never be forgotten.

## GOOD SORT OF THE MONTH



Darren Walker and daughter Sophie are absolute champs for stepping up to sort out that absolute shocker of a service lane between the fire station and the Matarangi shops.

Potholes are a hazard and an eyesore for everyone. They are a nightmare for school buses, heavy delivery trucks, and emergency fire appliances that access the lane every single day. By taking the morning off and carting metal all the way from their own farm, this dynamic duo did the hard yards to fix it up enough to make the area at least safe for the time being.

Darren and Sophie should definitely make tracks to Lesley's Coffee Cart sometime this month to claim their well-earned complimentary coffees for being our Good Sorts of the Month.

## Vale Alwyn Riggs

It is with sadness that we report the passing of Alwyn Riggs on Saturday 22nd August. Alwyn was a popular long term resident of Matarangi known for his golfing prowess, and being a former co-owner of Pipers Cafe with his wife Brenda.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to you Brenda, his son Andrew and stepsons Nathan and Rowan and all their families. Alwyn will always be remembered in Matarangi with great fondness.

## Mercury Bay Community Board September Update

The Mercury Bay Community Board has greenlit a comprehensive suite of infrastructure upgrades, local land agreements, and community funding allocations following the return of Chairperson Richard Shelford-Woodcock from his recent leave of absence.

Convening to address a substantial backlog of local business, the board pushed forward on critical public works across the northern beaches while directly engaging with heated public feedback regarding infrastructure and local commercial fees.

Infrastructure and asset management took top billing during the session, highlighted by a major recommendation for Council to approve \$670,000 from the Hot Water Beach Parking Reserve Fund. These capital works will completely upgrade the heavily utilised

wastewater treatment and disposal system at the Hot Water Beach ablutions block. Further down the coast, long-term operational certainty was secured for emergency services after the board recommended Council approve a 99-year Licence to Occupy for the wastewater system located at the Kūaotunu Fire Station.

Land use and local classifications also sparked significant debate among members. The board flatly rejected a controversial proposal to reclassify Moewai Park Reserve from a Recreation Reserve to a Local Purpose Reserve for community facilities, opting instead to preserve its current status for dedicated sports and active recreation.

Meanwhile, environmental stewardship received a nod in Ōtama, with a recommended five-year Licence to Occupy at 344 Black Jack Road to allow adjoining landowners to maintain native planting and manage persistent weed control. The board also maintained its formal backing for the ongoing Bluff Road Connectivity Project, though members cautioned that future steps remain strictly subject to an upcoming coastal track assessment, a rigorous whole-of-life cost analysis, and a thorough review of long-term financial implications.

Community grants and local submissions brought a mix of outcomes for local groups. Grey Power Mercury Bay successfully secured \$1,000 in discretionary funding to support their upcoming International Day of the Older Person event. Conversely, a \$5,000 funding request from the Aotearoa Astrotourism Academy for a Kūaotunu-based astronomy and astrotourism course was declined, with board members determining the initiative was better aligned with district-wide economic development funds rather than localized discretionary boards.

During the public forum, residents presented strong submissions in favour of a proposed footpath extension along Black Jack Road in Kūaotunu to improve pedestrian safety. This stood in stark contrast to tense feedback from Whitianga commercial boat operators, who aired serious grievances regarding recent hikes to wharf fees and charges.

To wrap up the meeting, members received the newly established Community Group Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of ongoing community projects, social programmes, and local services operating right across the peninsula.



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# Mammography for the Eastern Coromandel Peninsula

By Mike Brown, Mercury Bay Medical Equipment Trust



Featured: Sophie Walker of Matarangi Four Square was delighted to have the opportunity to sign the Project Mammogram petition.

Project Mammogram, a Lions and community-led philanthropic multi-year fundraising initiative that raised \$350,000, led to the establishment and incorporation of a charitable trust, The Mercury Bay Medical Equipment Trust (the Trust), in 2024.

These funds, now totalling \$359,979, are managed by the Trust with the purpose of purchasing a 3D mammogram machine for the use of women on the Coromandel Peninsula.

The Trust's objective is to assist in the early detection of breast cancer by making breast screening easily accessible, leading to better clinical outcomes for our women, and reducing costs to Health New Zealand (HNZ) and Breast Screen Aotearoa (BSA).

We confirmed from the community during the fundraising campaign that the key issue for our women not having regular mammograms was accessibility to the existing service, which is currently run via mobile units visiting the peninsula biennially.

Our proposal involves transitioning breast screening to the more accurate 3D mammography from the current 2D technology, which results in savings to HNZ and BSA by finding breast cancers earlier. We propose moving to a more cost-effective, more accessible fixed mammography site in Whitianga rather than relying on a mobile unit.

It is important to note that BreastScreen Midlands operates a fixed unit in Thames using 2D technology. Furthermore, this initiative aims to give access to women of all ages on the Coromandel Peninsula to have a screening mammogram through a public-private partnership.

Over the last 12 months, we have been in discussion with Breast Screen Aotearoa (BSA), Breast Screen Midlands (BSM), and Health NZ Te Whatu Ora (HNZ) regarding the structure of a fixed

mammogram unit based in Whitianga and serving the Eastern Coromandel. These discussions have been frustrating and in vain. As a result, we wrote to the Minister of Health, Simeon Brown, on 2 June 2026, expressing our disappointment and requesting his assistance and intervention. The letter was copied to our local Member of Parliament, The Honourable Scott Simpson.

The response we received on 6 July from the Ministry was poorly researched and factually incorrect, particularly relating to the quantity of mammograms taken within the Eastern Coromandel, and it did not take into account the recent change in the age range of publicly funded mammograms from 69 to 74 years old.

We wrote back to Minister Brown, with a copy sent to Scott Simpson on 16 July, pointing out these inaccuracies and asking him to reconsider our proposal; apart from an acknowledgement of our letter, we have not heard anything.

In the meantime, some positive progress has been made in that we have arranged a meeting with Coromandel MP Scott Simpson at Parliament at 11 am on Thursday, 17 September, who will receive the petition from the people of the Eastern Coromandel.

The objective of the petition is to confirm to the Minister of Health that our Eastern Coromandel communities want better accessibility to breast screening based at a 3D fixed site in Whitianga, thus providing better clinical outcomes. Eastern Coromandel results as of 22 August support the above, with 1,503 signatures collected after two weeks.

A big thank you to Matarangi 4 Square and the Whangapoua Store for running the petition for the local residents.

## Scott Simpson

MP for Coromandel

**Contact me anytime**

0800 550 330 • [scottsimpson.co.nz](http://scottsimpson.co.nz)  
[mpcoromandel@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:mpcoromandel@parliament.govt.nz)  
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7



**Featured:** Grant Short displays the initial bound proof of his upcoming book, a deeply personal project that transformed from a simple family history into an extraordinary 80-year-old historical detective trail spanning from New Zealand to the Italian Apennines. The book will be launched in Matarangi on ANZAC Day 2027.



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# Flight of Freedom: Retracing a Kiwi Spitfire Pilot’s Great Escape

Eighty years after Flight Lieutenant Sydney Short escaped from an Italian prisoner-of-war camp, his sons Grant and Lee are preparing to retrace their father’s remarkable journey to freedom – and meet the Italian family whose courage helped keep him alive.

What began after ANZAC Day 2025 as a simple family project to document their father’s service as a World War II fighter pilot has evolved into a much bigger story. Grant Short has written a book about his father’s wartime experiences and recently received the first bound, pre-production proof copy.

Over the next few months, he will edit and format the text, with publication and the official book launch scheduled for next ANZAC Day.

At the heart of the book are the wartime artefacts collected and carefully preserved by the brothers’ mother. Among the faded photographs, newspaper clippings and official military notifications was evidence of a remarkable story of survival – and of the people who risked their own safety to help a young New Zealand pilot escape the Nazis.

The records reveal that Syd left behind a fiancée when he embarked for overseas service. During his deployment, his aircraft was shot down twice. After the second incident, he was listed as Missing in Action, Presumed Killed. His family and fiancée were left to live with that devastating uncertainty until subsequent notifications confirmed that he was alive, although being held as a prisoner of war.

Flight Lieutenant Sydney Short was a Kiwi pilot serving with the RAF when he was shot down and wounded in his Spitfire near Kairouan, Tunisia, on 2 February 1943. Captured immediately by the Luftwaffe, he spent the next seven months convalescing in military hospitals across North Africa and Italy before being transferred to prisoner-of-war camp P.G. 47 in Modena in September 1943.

His circumstances changed dramatically just days later when Italy signed an armistice with the Allies. Amid the resulting chaos, Short escaped with two fellow Allied servicemen.

Their first assistance came from a local Italian woman who provided them with money, disguises and wheels to help them travel south into the hills. The three men eventually found refuge with the Orvinti family in the Apennine village of Riccò, where they spent the winter hidden away from Nazi-Fascist patrols and checkpoints.

For seven months, ordinary Italian civilians risked their own safety to shelter the escaped airmen.

By April 1944, the Italian Resistance, known as the CLN, had organised a plan to move the men to safety. Forged papers and ingenious social camouflage were used to conceal their identities, including having the escapees pretend to be deaf-mutes so that their foreign accents would not arouse suspicion.

The journey to Switzerland was an extraordinary undertaking.

The escapees pedalled 30 kilometres to Modena, caught a train through Milan to Laveno, crossed Lake Maggiore by ferry and then embarked on an overnight trek through the Val Grande mountains. Guided by an underground partisan network, Short and six other Allied evaders eventually crossed the border into neutral Switzerland at Cortaccio on 4 April 1944.

Short was officially interned near Bern, where he received medical treatment. He remained in Switzerland until October

1944 before returning to flying duties with the RAF a few months later. For decades, that was where the family history largely ended.

Then, while preparing to travel to Australia ahead of the 2025 New Zealand winter, Grant discovered two letters from Italy, dated 1945 and 1947.

The translation of the 1947 letter opened an entirely new chapter. It revealed that an Italian couple had risked their lives to aid and shelter Syd following his escape from captivity.

Grant now wanted to find their descendants. What followed was an extraordinary historical detective trail stretching across 80 years.

He began with the Online Cenotaph database, where he discovered the specific name of the Italian wife. A targeted internet search for her name produced a single result – an article written by her grandson in a local Italian church magazine.

Grant then searched the Italian White Pages for the relevant region using the grandson’s surname. The search returned exactly one match.

He passed the details to Lee, who enlisted one of his commercial Italian business suppliers to call the contact number and make the initial approach. The grandson confirmed the family history immediately.

After eight decades of silence, contact between the two families had been restored.

The discovery was followed by another remarkable breakthrough. The Short brothers successfully located the family of the second Allied POW who had hidden alongside their father.

It is discoveries such as these that have shaped the book. Rather than simply recounting the harsh realities of World War II, Grant has sought to place his father’s experiences within the broader historical context while documenting the extraordinary acts of courage and decency shown by ordinary civilians caught up in the conflict.

Now, almost 83 years after Syd Short was shot down, the story is about to come full circle.

This month, Grant, his two daughters, his brother Lee and Lee’s two daughters are travelling to Italy to retrace their father’s escape from the POW camp and follow the route he took through the mountains to the safety of Switzerland.

For Grant, however, the most personal part of the journey will be returning to the farmhouse in the hamlet of Farneta di Riccò where his father was sheltered from the authorities for seven months.

There, the Short family will pay homage to the Italian family who risked their own lives to protect a young New Zealand airman they barely knew.

What began as an attempt by two brothers to preserve their father’s wartime story has now become an extraordinary reunion between two families separated by eight decades.

The arrival of the Short family in the Serramazzone district is already becoming a major local event, with a mayoral reception, local media interest and a documentary film crew set to record the visit.

For Syd Short’s sons and grandchildren, however, the significance of the journey will be much simpler: after more than 80 years, they are finally returning to the place where their father was hidden, and meeting the family whose courage helped bring him home.



It has been a busy August at Te Rerenga School, and I am so delighted to now be back at school after my recent successful spinal surgery. My huge appreciation goes to my Associate Principal, Odette Wilson, who ably stepped up and led the school for me in my absence. It was so reassuring to know that the school was in such capable hands.

A big thank you to Claire Veevers, our school librarian, who runs the Book Fair every year for Te Rerenga School! This year the total sales were \$1833.00, which amounts to \$700 worth of new books for our school library. Thank you to everyone who supported this great fundraiser.

Conservation and the environment were big on the agenda this month. Our Years 5, 6, and 7 students had a wonderful day down at Omaro Reserve, planting a range of native trees, flaxes, and shrubs with help from T.C.D.C, Surf Coromandel, and community volunteers.

Ruma Rangi (Year 7 & 8) also had a day planting 829 plants for the Trees for Survival Project. We have been involved with this programme since 2022, and a lot of effort went into getting the plants into the ground on a steep hillside. Each year we receive at least 800 seedlings (2-3cm high) which we pot up into planter bags and look after in our shade house for 12 months before planting them out in our community. Power Co and Gallagher Insurance are our sponsors, providing the plants, potting mix, shade house, and watering system at no cost to the school.

We also had our annual visit from the Japanese students of Evakona English Language School. Our Year 5 and 6 children, with help from the Year 1 and 2s, welcomed the students on Friday 14th August. The

students visit us each year and enjoy sharing waiata and having a tour of our rural school. As a farewell gift, the Evakona students shared origami figures they had made.

August is also the month for our School & North Peninsula Cross Country events at Te Rerenga. The successful leading runners from our school event went on to the Peninsula North Cluster Cross Country, which was held at our school. Runners joined us from Coromandel Area School and Colville School. The next challenge for these runners is the Thames Valley Cross Country event in Ngatea.

Last Monday, we held a special retirement assembly for Teresa, our long-term Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB). Teresa, who was based at our school for 12 ½ years, worked in this specialist role across the schools on the Peninsula. Teresa was honoured with waiata and haka, and was presented with our traditional farewell gift of a feather artwork that reflects our school whakatauki.

In return, Teresa presented a beautiful korowai to the school, which will be worn by children at special events and will be a treasured taonga. It had been blessed by Matua Barry-George Colmer, who is a past pupil and former parent of Te Rerenga. Barry-George, who also taught here, has now taken up the RTLB position that Teresa vacated.

The korowai features our school colours, which are also the colours of our local iwi, Ngāti Huarere, depicting the shades of a pāua shell. It was worn for the first time by Mary-Mei Foreman, who led the Waiata at our Peninsula Schools Cultural Festival held at Coromandel Area School on Friday 28th August. The children's performance was outstanding and we were extremely proud of them.

Mary Kedzlie  
Principal

*Ma te huruhuru ka rere te manu  
Adorn the bird with feathers to enable it to fly.*



Featured: Teresa with Mary-Mei Foreman at the Peninsula Cultural Festival



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# Where in the World is the Matarangi Beach Paper?

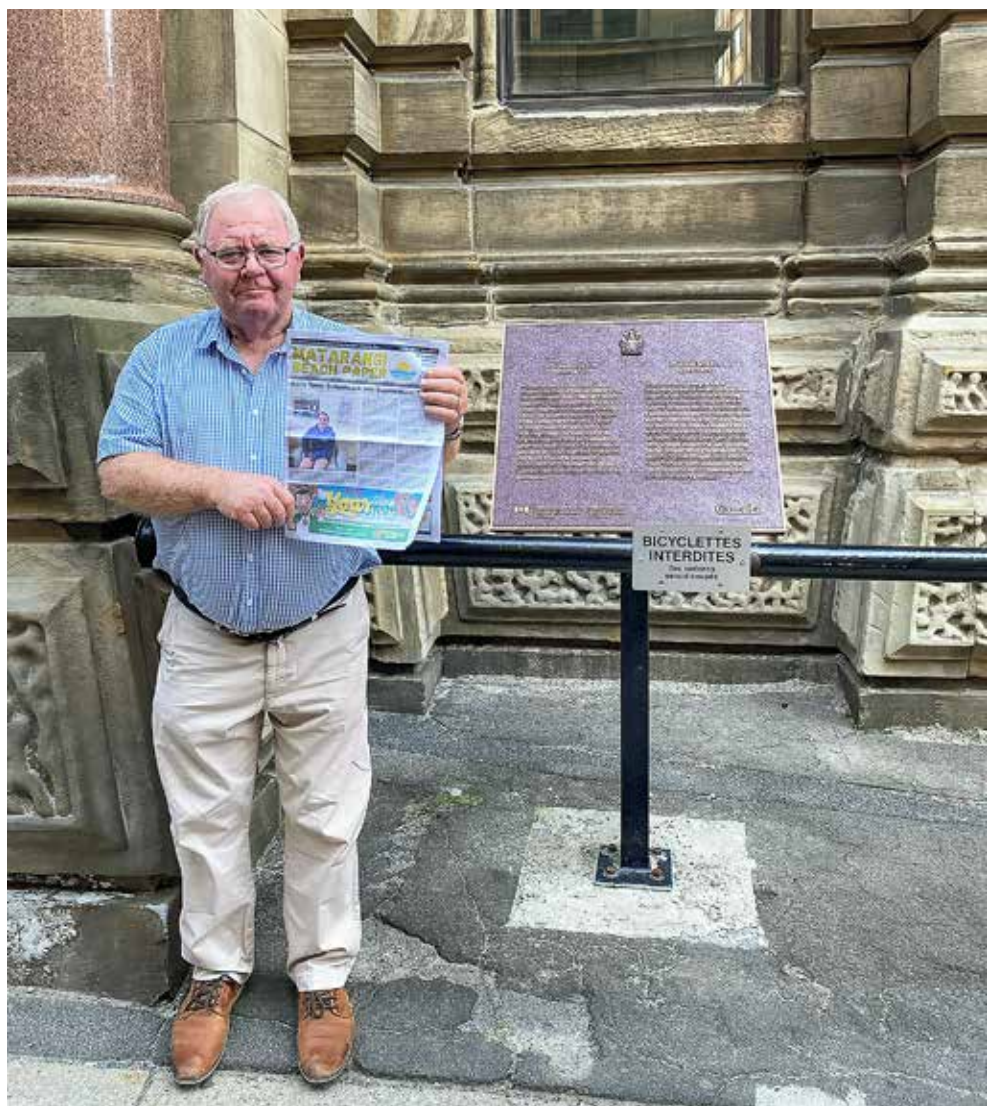


Our local Yoga teacher Jose Kakebekke last month visited the town of Sloten in The Netherlands and took with her a copy of the Matarangi Beach Paper to visit another place in our wonderful world.

If you're planning a trip over to Europe and want to escape the usual tourist traps, put Sloten on your radar. Tucked away on the western edge of Amsterdam, this charming historic village feels a world away from the bustling city centre.

Dating right back to the Middle Ages, it has managed to hold onto its proper, old-school village vibe. Even though it was officially incorporated into Amsterdam back in 1921, it hasn't lost an ounce of its unique character.

It is an absolute gem for a day trip, packed with beautiful old houses and a lovely historic church. The real star of the show is the famous Sloter Molen, a stunning working windmill that looks like something straight out of a postcard. It's the perfect spot to slow down, wander the quiet lanes, and experience a slice of authentic Dutch history without the massive crowds.



Recently, former Deputy Mayor Murray McLean and his wife, Arlene, travelled to Toronto, Canada, to visit their son, Kirk, and his family. During the visit, Kirk took his parents and his two sons on a road trip to Montreal.

This journey held a special significance for Murray; just last year, while doing family research, he discovered that his grandfather, Robert McLean, had once worked in Montreal as a coachman for Mr. Molson, of the famous Canadian brewery and banking family.

How Robert ended up in Montreal is an incredible story in itself. Born in Coromandel in 1881, Robert found work scarce by 1897. Eager for adventure, he travelled to Sydney and joined the New South Wales Cavalry Regiment after aging himself up by three years. He was deployed to South Africa to fight in the Boer War, eventually receiving his discharge in Cape Town in 1902, complete with a free passage back to New Zealand.

Instead of returning home, Robert's wanderlust took him to London, back to Africa—where he walked entirely across Swaziland—and back to London once more.

Finally, in 1906, he sailed across the Atlantic to Montreal. Murray treasures a photograph from this era showing Robert dressed as a coachman, complete with a top hat, during his employment with Mr. Molson.

While the family was walking along Montreal's Rue Saint-Jacques, they passed a historic building featuring a large brass plaque. Murray instantly recognised it as the very building from his grandfather's photograph. Murray thought this was the perfect spot to do a Where in the World photo!

Standing on the exact pavement where Robert had stood 120 years earlier, Murray captured a remarkable bridge across family generations and a connection back here on the Coromandel.

Robert eventually returned to New Zealand, settling in Whitianga, where he married Florence Henderson at St. Peter the Fisherman Church in 1910. Sadly, his adventurous life was cut short when he passed away in Turua in 1922 from pneumonia, aggravated by malaria he had contracted years earlier in Swaziland.



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Whitianga

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### Matarangi Volunteer Fire Brigade Association Inc.

Will be held at the Matarangi Fire Station on  
Wednesday 16th September 2026 at 7pm.

All financial members invited to attend.

If you have any queries, please contact:  
secretarymvfba@gmail.com



Matarangi locals Jean Brooks, Lance and Barbara Croawell, Robin and Cheryl Fleming enjoying time out with The Matarangi Beach paper at Zest Cafe in Rarotonga.



Angela Williams (centre) with friends Phil and Wendy Hopkinson and Irwin and Jo Wilson in Phuket with MBP. Both Angela and Phil are former property owners in Matarangi and love catching up on the local news!

# Congratulations Hundy & Jaime: What a Beautiful Wedding!



Congratulations to Hundy (Phillip) Parr and Jaime Shirley on their recent wedding. Hundy and Jaime got married at Kuaotunu on Saturday 22nd August.

“This wouldn’t have been able to happen without the love and support from our beautiful community over the last few months,” wrote the new Mrs Parr.

Our very best wishes to you both. We hope you both had a magical day celebrating with all your loved ones and it was everything you dreamed it would be.

Featured: Hundy and Jaime with their boys Phoenix, Chevy, Nikau and Mason on their wedding day.

## Acclaimed Author Stephanie Parkyn to Lead October Writers Workshop in Kuaotunu

A two-day Writers Weekend Workshop will take place in Kuaotunu, Coromandel, on Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 October 2026. The event is designed for individuals interested in creative writing and will be tutored by New Zealand historical fiction author Stephanie Parkyn.

The workshop programme will include structured masterclasses, skills training, dedicated writing periods, and opportunities for participants to network and share their work. The event aims to provide a practical environment for writers to develop their craft within the local coastal setting.

The tutor, Stephanie Parkyn, currently resides in the northern Coromandel and was raised in Christchurch.

She transitioned from a career in science to full-time writing in 2005 and has since published three historical fiction novels with Allen & Unwin. Parkyn has extensive tutoring experience, having hosted northern Coromandel writing retreats for the past two years, as well as running previous workshops in Tasmania and for the Rotorua Writers Group.

Tuition for the full weekend workshop is \$125 per person. Participants are required to arrange their own local accommodation, and all meals are at the attendee’s own expense.

Registration is required in advance as places are limited. For enquiries email at [johnson.parkyn@gmail.com](mailto:johnson.parkyn@gmail.com) or Phone 021 112 7077.





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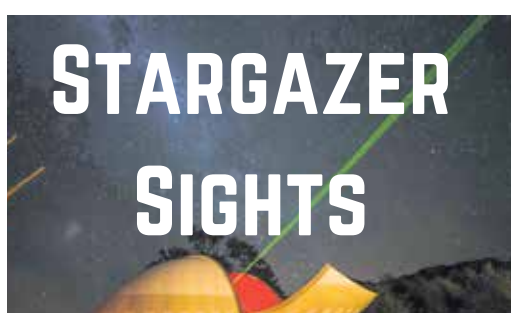
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September 2026

Venus continues to dominate the western dusk sky this month before it becomes lost in the Sun's glare. It is the brightest thing apart from the Moon at present and sits very near to the bright star Spica in Virgo. The ancients described the planets as 'wanderers' as they appear to wander through the stars and this month we can watch Venus wandering past Spica from night to night on its seven month path around the Sun. The much fainter and elusive Mercury soon joins the wanderers' party rapidly rising higher each evening and the Moon can help us find it.

There will be several Chinese Tiangong and International Space Station (ISS) passes to view this month but, as usual, timings may change especially towards the end of the month if they have to be moved to avoid space junk. It is always best to check the website heavens-above.com for updated timings.

September 3 – The bright Moon lies above and to the left of Matariki or the Pleiades at dawn but binoculars will help find them.

September 5 – Faint Mars lies half way between the Moon and bright Jupiter in the pre-dawn sky.

September 7 – The Moon now lies just below Mars at dawn with bright Jupiter further down.

September 9 – The Moon now lies right below Jupiter at dawn and there will be a Tiangong pass from 5:44am in the west.

September 12 – An absolutely minute crescent Moon sits just beside faint Mercury in the early dusk western sky.

September 13 – The minute crescent Moon now lies half way between Mercury and much brighter Venus at dusk.

September 14 – The thin crescent Moon now lies just above Venus at dusk while at dawn we have a good ISS pass in the north from 5:19am followed by a Tiangong pass in the SW from 5:41am.

September 16 – Venus sits midway between the crescent Moon and faint Mercury on the western dusk horizon and from 5:19am in the NE we have a very bright ISS pass followed by a Tiangong pass from 5:22am in the SW.

September 17 – The Moon is now well above Venus and just below the red giant star Antares in Scorpio.

September 18 – The Moon has moved to lie just above the red giant star Antares in Scorpio while in the pre-dawn sky there is a good ISS pass in the west from 5:20am.

September 20 – There will be a low ISS pass in the SW from 5:20am.

September 25 – At dusk faint Mercury lies half way between brilliant Venus and the horizon and just below the bright star Spica in Virgo at dusk.

September 26 – Faint Mercury is now right next to Spica in the west while in the east the Moon sits just above Saturn.

September 27 – Mercury is now just above and to the right of Spica at dusk and the Moon is just to the left of Saturn in the east while we have a Tiangong pass in the NW from 8:12pm.

September 28 – The Moon is now well below Saturn in the east and there will be a Tiangong pass in the west from 8:49pm moving above Venus.

September 29 – Faint Mercury is now well above Spica at dusk and rapidly approaching brilliant Venus and there is a bright Tiangong pass in the west from 7:50pm.

September 30 – There will be a Tiangong pass in the west from 8:28pm moving right beside Venus.

October 1 – Faint Mercury has now risen to lie half way between brilliant Venus and Spica at dusk.



## ATOM Is Back! A Taste of Matarangi Returns for a Bigger, Better Day Out in 2027

Great food, fabulous drinks, live music and a few exciting new additions — A Taste of Matarangi is back, and the team behind ATOM is promising an even bigger and better festival experience when the Village Green comes alive on Saturday, April 3, 2027.

After taking a break in 2026, A Taste of Matarangi (ATOM) is returning to Matarangi Village Green, bringing together everything people love about the event — great food, drinks, live entertainment and a fantastic atmosphere for 2027. The ATOM team has been busy behind the scenes planning the next event and is looking forward to welcoming locals and visitors back for what promises to be another memorable day.

A new ATOM website is also currently in development, with details to be shared as soon as it is ready.

### Step Up to VIP

One of the biggest changes for 2027 is the introduction of an exciting new VIP experience. VIP guests will have their own dedicated area featuring a stretched tent, comfortable seating, private bar and toilets, as well as some food and drinks included as part of the VIP experience. It's the perfect option for anyone wanting to enjoy ATOM with a little extra comfort — whether you're celebrating a special occasion, catching up with friends or entertaining clients.

### Early Bird/First Release Tickets — Just \$35

The committee is conscious that there has been an unfortunate increase in ticket prices this year, largely as a result of the significant rise in the costs of staging an event of this size. To help festival-goers get in early, Early Bird/First release tickets will be just \$35. They will be available from Labour Weekend until sold out, giving people a chance to secure their tickets before the regular ticket price comes into effect. So, if ATOM is on your 2027 calendar, getting in early is definitely worthwhile!

### Your Gazebo, Your Spot — Already Set Up!

Forget arriving early to claim a good spot — ATOM is introducing a new gazebo booking system for 2027. Guests will be able to book a gazebo for a small charge and will be allocated a designated spot in advance. Simply turn up,

find your allocated site and settle in for the day. No worrying about whether you'll find a decent spot!

### A Taste of What's to Come

Food and beverage will once again be at the heart of ATOM, with the organisers working hard to bring together a fantastic array of food and beverage vendors. For 2027, the team is also looking to expand the range of offerings, with distilleries, artisan food producers and craft stalls all being invited to take part.

The aim is to create a great mix of food, wine, craft beer, spirits and interesting local products — giving visitors plenty to taste, discover and enjoy throughout the day. Any vendors interested in being part of ATOM 2027 are encouraged to get in touch via email at [atastematarangi@gmail.com](mailto:atastematarangi@gmail.com) or by calling 027 289 9807.

### And Then There's the Music...

Of course, no ATOM would be complete without great live music — and the entertainment is already shaping up nicely. Black and Gold and Split-Second are both locked in for 2027. Black and Gold are familiar faces at ATOM and have previously had festival-goers up dancing and enjoying their energetic performances. Their return, alongside Split-Second, promises to provide the perfect soundtrack to a day of great food, drinks and good company. More entertainment announcements will be made as the event gets closer.

### More Than Just a Festival

While ATOM is all about having a great day out, there is an important reason behind the event. A Taste of Matarangi is organised by volunteers with a strong commitment to supporting the local community. Through previous events, ATOM has raised more than \$150,000 for local community organisations and causes.

Sponsorship is an important part of making the event possible each year, and the ATOM team is looking for businesses and organisations that would like to get behind the festival and support its ongoing contribution to the community. If you would like to sponsor ATOM 2027, please contact Gilly on 027 289 9807.

ATOM 2027 is shaping up to be a day not to be missed. Get your friends together, save the date and get ready to eat, drink, dance and enjoy everything A Taste of Matarangi has to offer. We can't wait to see you there!

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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