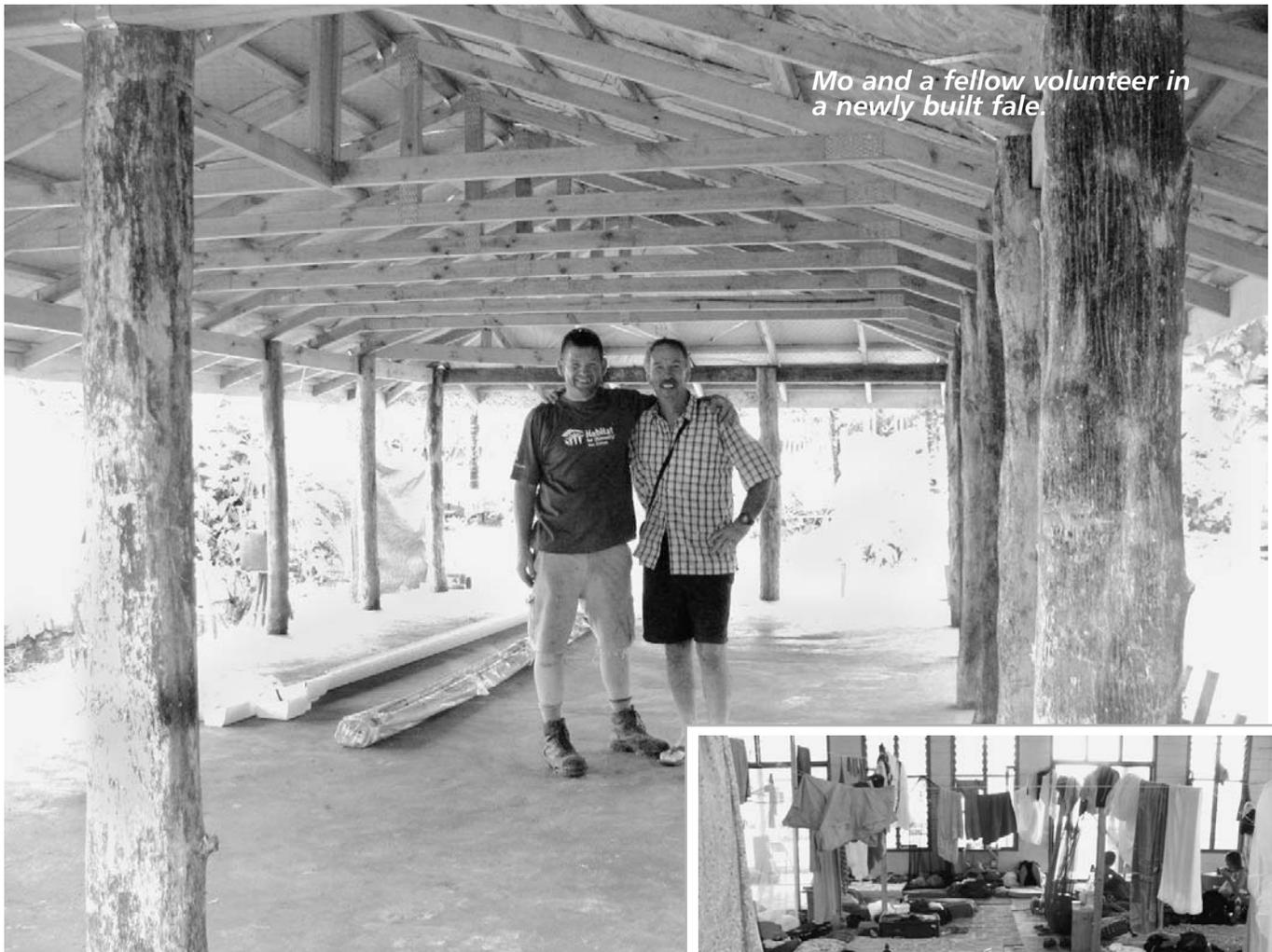


TOM *okato*

Building fale for tsunami-devastated Samoa: **Mo Donald helps out**



Mo and a fellow volunteer in a newly built fale.

We often acknowledge that there are people worse off than ourselves. Less often, we find we have an opportunity to make a positive difference. For three weeks in April, Mo Donald did just that when he joined Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) to provide dwellings for people left homeless by Samoa's devastating tsunami of September, 2009.

(Continued on page 2)

Marae-style accommodation.



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THE TEAM

Co-ordinator/Features: **Kim Ferens** 06 751 1519
kim@thetom.co.nz

Advertising: **Kim Ferens** 06 751 1519
kim@thetom.co.nz

Writers: **Milly Carr** 06 752 4425
Kerry Lilley 06 752 4350

Proof Reader: **Maryanne Rossiter Bennett**

Graphics: **Ron Stratford**
origin@xtra.co.nz

The TOM Group Ltd, 22 Sutton Rd, R D 4, New Plymouth.
email kim@thetom.co.nz
Phone 0800 THE TOM
www.thetom.co.nz

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cover story Mo helps out in Samoa

HFHI is a Christian, not-for-profit organisation that works to provide dwellings for those in need. It donates or discounts building materials and supports volunteers to work beside recipients to build or renovate simple, decent houses, which are then purchased on a not-for-profit basis by means of affordable loans. Meanwhile, its Disaster Response Programme confronts housing needs imposed by natural disasters, war and civil unrest.

Late last year, Mo received an HFNI newsletter, which outlined a project to provide housing for those left homeless by the tsunami. Mo, Anne, and daughters Jess, Ellee and Jodie had been to Samoa for family holidays and had been looked after really well. Mo has building skills and saw that he could give something back. He also recognised an opportunity to meet new people and a chance for an overseas holiday. He took up the challenge.

As Mo and his 24 fellow volunteers approached Apia from 10,000 feet, they craned for a glimpse of the devastation below. Their gazes were met by a swathe of flattened houses, but the vegetation was regrowing well and much of the damage that they would discover on the ground remained hidden as yet. On landing, they received the "standard greeting", a briefing and a quick tour of Apia. Then they were taken to their accommodation at Lepa's church hall on the south-east of the island, where each volunteer chose a vacant mattress from the fifty-odd laid out, marae style. Each mattress was furnished with two sheets and a pillow, and there were a few mosquito nets to share. There were also five showers, five toilets, one hand basin and one mirror. These would be the group's home comforts. It took a bit of adjusting to for a fellow from the country, used to leading a fairly solitary life.

Each morning at six o'clock, as the sun was just beginning to rise, the lights went on and the volunteers headed for tepid showers. These were followed by breakfast washed down by cups of tea, which made them all sweat! At 7am to 7.15am, each six-strong team would be transported to its worksite, where everyone would set to work building fale until 4.30pm, with a break for lunch. Each fale was built on its original site with its burial site out front or further up the hills for those families who now felt insecure by the sea. Each was of a standard plan with 18 poles around the perimeter, a corrugated iron hip roof and a concrete floor. An average volunteer team would complete one fale a week.

On his first day, Mo dug footings. The temperature rose to 36 or 38 degrees centigrade and it was very humid. "I got overheated and couldn't get cool," he told me. "I thought I was going to die." However, it didn't take him long to learn that you had to pace yourself: He would work for half to one hour, sit in the shade for 15 minutes, have a drink, and prepare for the next foray. Hydration was important. There were big water bottles out on the sites, and plenty of coconuts. Workers would husk them, make a hole in one end and drink the milk. "We would each drink four to six litres (of fluid) a day and only go to the loo a couple of times. We sweated the rest," said Mo. The only time the workers felt relatively comfortable during work hours, he told me, was when it was raining and they could take off their shirts and enjoy the cool water flowing over their bodies.

During their first week, Mo and his team completed one fale. For the remaining fortnight, Mo helped manage the team effort from the resource centre, where about 12 people arranged the human and physical resources necessary to complete projects.

This utilised his well-honed organisational skills and gave him a real buzz.

Evening meals were Samoan style. A drum beat would announce that the food was ready and the attending minister would say grace. Women were served first. Sometimes, meals would be accompanied by entertainment, such as dancing. On a normal night there would be chicken, pork or fish curry, taro, carrots, and potatoes, salads, rice and really good breads. But there were few green leaves and Mo was surprised at the lack of fresh fruits. Each Wednesday night a little pig would be killed for the traditional local feast. It was supposed to be a delicacy but was mostly fat and not popular. One night, the volunteers were served a Kentucky fried-style meal with chips, and a sausage. The meals weren't overly big but they were adequate because people didn't lose weight. Everyone, however, had gut problems and there was a major outbreak over four or five days. Three or four volunteers even had to be taken off to the local hospital, where their dehydration was treated with intravenous fluids. "It knocked the sh_ out of everybody!" quipped Mo.

After work was the best part of the day, Mo reckoned. Everyone had worked hard and they all made the most of their leisure time. They would jump in vans or trucks and head up the road to the Aladdin's cave of a shop to buy beer or Coke, and then submerge themselves in the cool sea to drink it. On Sundays, everyone was expected to attend church. "The services were amazing," enthused Mo, "and the volume of the singing was unbelievable." The collection took up a good deal of the service and all donations were read out. Teams donated collectively, but it was difficult to avoid the sense of competition when the bigger donations were announced with much fanfare.

Three weeks after he had arrived, Mo left Apia with new friends and the satisfaction of knowing that he had made a real difference for the project and the people of Samoa. "Would you do it again?" I asked. "Absolutely!" he replied enthusiastically, and he gave me a poem written by a fellow volunteer, who he felt encapsulated, his group's experience. He has asked that it be shared with TOM readers.

Seleapaga.

As we approached from 10,000 feet
We shuffled across necks craned in our seat

A lush green misty jungle did meet our eyes
Guarded by coral reef, sea of blue and turquoise

Soft Pacific melodies played out by a band
Greeted by smiles now surrounded by sand

In an instant the island had captured our hearts
From the corner of the church hall a hungry gecko darts

Fales sit shaded by lazy palms, a naked child runs back into
loving arms
Samoa's true beauty portrayed in these laid back charms

The rising sun in the sky brings joy to those beneath
As the coconut seller pulls machete from sheath.

A prayer, a devotion, cold Vailima in the ocean
Sat together in the cool water watching the waterfall in motion

Games of volleyball and rugby completed by the road
A dry rocky ravine where a river once flowed

Beautiful flowers adorn the hair of the dusky skinned maiden
With fresh fruit, fish and taro our evening plates are laden

So we praise you Lord for life, for love, help us to be strong
Now with the island and its people, let Samoa be our song.

Dale Jones, April 2010

Story by Kerry Lilley



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Mervyn and Iris Putt of Okato: Their Life and Times

Mervyn and Iris Putt are among the oldest residents in Okato and head one of its oldest families.

"Des Corbett, Ray Rook and me — we're all having an argument about who's going to be the next mayor," Merv laughs.

I talked to Iris and Merv recently about their family history, their own lives and their aspirations for the future. As I approach their house, I notice a small plaque announcing, 'Putt of Combe'. "Tell me about that," I suggest.

"That's where my forefathers came from," Merv replies. Combe House is an Elizabethan manor surrounded by 350 acres of country estate in Devon, England. It was bought in 1614 by Nicholas Putt, a wealthy, non-practising barrister, who became the sheriff of Devon in 1644. It is still owned by descendants of the Putt family today. "We visited (the house) in 1989," Merv tells me. "They had a lot of colonials — Putt relations — visiting, but it cost \$260 a night, so we didn't stay."

Merv's great-great-grandfather on his father's side, Richard, with his wife, Elizabeth, and their four children emigrated from Devon with the first sailing of the *William Bryan*, leaving England in 1840 and arriving in New Plymouth in 1841. They were the first Putts to come to New Zealand. Merv's mother, Vera, became an eighteen year old London war bride when she married Clyde Putt, who had been shoeing horses and fighting in France during World War I. Vera and Clyde returned to New Zealand in 1919 on the *Kigoma*, a steam ship carrying troops home from the war, in separate cabins. Vera carried a little piece of England with her — an acorn, which she planted in the grounds of St Pauls Church. "It's now a mighty oak!" beams Iris.

Vera and Clyde settled into a cottage on Kaihihi Road and, while Clyde pursued his craft as a blacksmith and worked on the family farm on the corner of Hampton Road, Vera found herself tackling unfamiliar and sometimes unpalatable chores, such as milking the house cows, churning butter and chopping the heads off fowls, which fluttered several yards away from her in their death throws. Merv's older sister, Joy, was born the following year and Dorrie arrived in 1922. In 1927, Merv joined his sisters and not long after that, the family moved into a house on an acre of land that Clyde owned on Carthew Street, opposite Fox's General Store. Then, in 1929, John's arrival completed the family.

There was no TV, computer, refrigerator, deep freeze, electric or gas stove, telephone or flush toilet in those days. There was little hot water either, and radios were in their infancy. The Putt children had to make their own fun for the most part. "I was a township boy," insists Merv. All the same, he and his siblings played cowboys and Indians on their grandfather's farm tracks, played in the Okato Domain forest, and set up cricket wickets in the back paddock. And then, in bed at night, they

would take turns at story telling — tales drawn from their imaginations of their heroes, and of heroes they made up. There was mischief to be had too!

"We used to shoot sparrows," Merv admits. "There was an open gutter from the cowshed to the cans outside. The milk flowed along the gutter and into the cans. The sparrows used to sit on the edge, drinking the milk and we used to shoot them with slug guns. The poor things would fall off, either onto the ground or into the milk. I would never do it now!"

There is also the story of several young lads who, finding an unlocked door in the deserted Catholic presbytery, decided to explore the building. They were caught and were admonished in front of the entire assembled school. Many years later, John ventured that Merv had been lucky not to be there too. To his surprise, Merv retorted, "But I was! I heard you get caught so I hopped out a window and they didn't see me!"

The Putt family was quite sports orientated and Mervyn was a great sportsman. He represented Taranaki for five years at senior level rugby, and played top level cricket for Taranaki for a number of years. John reckons that Merv prepared himself for it thus: The boys would prepare a cricket wicket in Carroll Humphrey's back paddock, then Merv would insist on being 'England' or 'Australia' and make his brother 'New Zealand', upon which Merv would proceed to thrash John as only New Zealand could be thrashed in the late 1930's and early 1940's. John believes this

gave Merv the confidence to take on the likes of Laurie Miller, Ted Meuli and other New Zealand players later in life. When it came to rugby, Merv would take John into the back paddock and stand several yards in front of his brother with a rugby ball announcing, "I'm going to run past you. Try to tackle me." Merv would succeed in getting past, of course, and again John believes it gave Merv the confidence to take on and beat the likes of Roy Roper. John admits now that he didn't even try to tackle Merv; he was too scared.

Merv went to Okato Primary School and then New Plymouth Boys' High School, there being no high school in Okato at the time. "We were bus boys and the Waitara crowd were train boys," he said. "I went to high school for a year and three-quarters, then after fourth form, I got an apprenticeship with Charlie Maxwell to learn the motor mechanic trade."



Iris and Merv as we know them today.



Merv as a boy, surrounded by his family



Iris (far left) and friends riding to school.

As well as being an automotive engineer, Charlie was an inventor of farm machinery, including a hay bale loader and a machine that packed butter for the local dairy factory. He worked out of what was most recently Ray Rook's Coastal Motors garage and it was there that Merv gained his A Grade Certificate. When Charlie sold the business to Doug Lamb, Merv went with it, but when Ray Rook bought Doug out in 1953, Merv went to work for Keith Roebuck, who had a carrying business. Within a couple of weeks, they had decided to start a new garage, "Putt and Roebuck". The business was successful, servicing vehicles and selling petrol and automotive incidentals. Two of their biggest clients were the Oxford and Okato dairy factories and they serviced vehicles from the quarries, as well as those of other local businesses and townspeople. The partnership lasted for 25 years, when Merv bought Keith out. Merv worked the business alone for another 10 years, and then, in 1988, sold to Milton Reynolds.

Merv and Iris's combined story began back in the late forties when the Young People's Club used to hold dances in the Hempton Hall. Whenever a dance was scheduled, Iris's friend, Eileen Kettlewell, who was the daughter of the manager of the Leith Road Dairy Factory, would invite her friend, Iris Topless, to come. Iris was one of five children, who grew up on the family farm at Huirangi. Her grandfather had emigrated from Sussex in England and although Iris doesn't know where her mother's roots were, she does know that she was a Whitehead from a Tikorangi farming family. Iris's life and that of her five siblings revolved around farming, their horses and their chooks. They even used to play farming games. "We led a pretty quiet, country life," Iris reflects.

Iris went as far as standard 6 (year 8) at Huirangi School but there was no local high school and no train to Waitara from whence she could have taken a train into New Plymouth, so she didn't go to high school at all. In any event, her father died when she was 13 and Iris was required to serve as family housekeeper while her mother and brothers worked the farm. "With four kids in the family, I was kept busy," Iris reports.

Attending the dances out at Okato was a welcome respite from her domestic responsibilities, and she got to enjoy dancing with Merv, who eventually asked her to marry him. The wedding was held at St Mary's Church in New Plymouth on 4 February 1950 and the Reverend JT Holland, who later became a bishop, officiated. The couple had four children, Glenys, Graeme, Carole and Wayne. "A woman's job in those times was to keep the home fires burning," Iris says, and although she had plenty of community involvement through her work on various committees, she didn't have a lot of spare time to develop her own interests.

Meanwhile, Merv continued to play top level rugby and cricket. When he knocked off rugby, he played golf, winning the Senior Match Play Championships at Tumahu Golf Club 10 times and serving as Club President for five years.

Since his retirement, Merv has been "busier than ever". He's not a gardener — he leaves that up to Iris — but he enjoys anything mechanical and "does a bit" for Glenys (his daughter) and Margaret Douglas on their farm. He has been a member of the Lions Club for 25 years and is a past President. Iris's time, meanwhile, is absorbed with committee work — she is currently on the Tumahu Golf Club Ladies' Committee, the Parish Council, Okato Community Trust and Okato Combined Fellowship, and is currently President of the Okato Historical Society. She is also involved with Rural Women, and Care and Craft, and looks after Lazy Acres homestay. She enjoys embroidery, cross-stitch and fabric crafts and, being a carer by nature, gets pleasure from Parish visiting and providing meals for people when they need them. "She's a very kind person, really," says Merv, proudly.

Iris and Merv have led full and interesting lives and have contributed their fair share to the community, but they still have dreams to fulfill. They belong to a caravan club and have just traded their caravan up to a campervan. Now, they have to find time to use it! We wish them good health, happy times and trouble-free motoring.

Reference: 'Mervyn Putt, This Is Your Life' by John Putt

by Kerry Lilley



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Robert and Barbara Allan: supporting Christians and creating art

For the past eight months, Robert Allan has ministered to the people of Okato/Oakura Co-operating Parish. He arrived here with his wife, Barbara, in September last year.

"Some of our friends call us The Mad Allans," grins Robert by way of introduction, as he guides me to their light and airy art studio behind St Lukes Hall.

Robert was born and raised in Blenheim, and after leaving school worked in a tailor's and menswear shop, where his title was Apprentice to the Tailor's Labourer. He still does some hand sewing for Barbara. When he was 20, he followed a calling into the ministry and attended Trinity Theological College in Auckland, where he completed his studies. He was then appointed to the Dargaville Parish, with oversight of Te Kopuru and the country districts.

He resigned from the ministry in 1967 and worked as a funeral director, then on farms, before returning to the ministry in 1970. For the next 18 years, he led 'flocks' in the central Canterbury towns of Darfield, Lincoln and Christchurch. At the same time he served as Chaplain to rural industries, the freezing works and Crown Research divisions and, for a time, to Muslim students at Lincoln University.

This last had a huge impact on the way he views fundamentalists of all religions. He believes that there are many more commonalities than differences in the major religions. "There is a danger in our perception that only we are right and that ours are the only valid ideals," he proposes. "My beliefs can never encompass the whole truth because the truth is much bigger than me. I walk according to the path I've been given. I am very convinced about the Christian faith but I'm not convinced that it is all there is. Therefore, I can accept people of all faiths and religions."

Barbara was born in Levin and is of the Roman Catholic faith. She spent her growing years in Foxton. Following her school days, the family moved to Wellington and she worked in accounts in the Herd St Post Office. Barbara married her late husband and they moved to Auckland for a time, but returned to the Levin district to milk cows and to bring up their children, who eventually numbered 10. Life was full and, until the last child started school, Barbara had little spare time for self-development or leisure pursuits.

Eventually, after several near misses, Barbara and Robert found each other in Levin. Robert was ministering to the Methodist St Johns congregation there and Barbara had been brought in to look after Robert's mother, who had Alzheimer's Disease. According to Robert, they had lived "almost side by side" for a long time, coming close but never actually meeting. They married in 1994 and have been together for nearly 18 years now. They have 12 children between them and have just had their thirty-ninth grandchild.

Barbara and Robert have always worked where they've been

sent, have lived in some isolated places and have travelled all over the country together. Their most recent parish was Pahiataua (inland from Palmerston North), from whence Robert officially retired in 2007. Following that, the couple travelled the West Coast of the South Island in their motor home, ministered from time to time at Westport and spent a year at Ongaonga, where their daughter and son-in-law owned a smallholding.



Barbara and Robert in their art studio.

Deciding against continuing retirement, they found there was a vacancy in the Okato/Oakura Co-operating Parish. "Where's that?" they wondered. Their daughter lives in Inglewood, which they discovered was not far distant, so it was settled. Robert is employed in the parish half time, theoretically, but is always available for special events, weddings, funerals, and for people who are sick or especially in need of his services. It's worked out well. Okato and Oakura have all the problems and struggles associated with keeping a rural parish going, but there are some really good things about it. "It's gorgeous, the people are so lovely, and it's got a fantastic sea coast too."

During the 'free' 50% of their time, Barbara and Robert practise their art. They have had five joint exhibitions in various places, and one day hope to have another that depicts the West Coast of New Zealand, from Greymouth in the south to Kawhia in the north.

Barbara paints. As a child, she spent a year in Palmerston North Hospital with rheumatic fever and used to amuse herself by drawing. One of the young doctors saw her work — cartoons of the nurses — and loved them, so he bought her a set of paints and a pad of paper as a means of encouragement. These came in very useful on this and subsequent trips to hospital when Barbara suffered relapses. She gave up painting during her child-raising years, but started again when her youngest child was six and has painted ever since. She uses oils, acrylics and watercolours and depicts a range of subjects, including scenery and portraits. She also does freehand knitting, crochets, makes toys, and does other fabric crafts. She showed me the alb she had made for Robert in 1994 when his waistline had expanded beyond the capacity of his suit, and several stoles to go with it that she had embroidered with religious motifs.

While his wife paints, Robert painstakingly executes exquisite pencil sketches, with an emphasis on evoking textural differences within the scenes he depicts. Barbara is teaching him to paint too, but he feels discouraged when the scenes he sees so clearly in his mind's eye don't come up to scratch. He also enjoys photography, and both Robert and Barbara carve wood. Barbara is currently carving a doll's head, modelled on one of her grandchildren. Once, when they held an exhibition in Pahiataua, they surrounded every piece with a hand carved frame.

Barbara and Robert have served 8 months of their tenure with the Co-operating Parish already and have no idea where life or the Church might take them in 16 months' time. Their commitment to their faith, interest in humanity and love of philosophical and theological discussion, together with their artistic and musical pursuits, however, will see them well occupied for many years to come.

Story and picture by Kerry Lilley

Arthouse Cinema

Arthouse News

Thanks to your support we are now offering midday sessions, which began as Mums and Bubs sessions at 12noon and are now open to all-comers. Tickets are \$11 for 12noon and 2pm sessions every day, and all day Monday — that's \$4 off our full ticket price!

Tickets for most sessions are available online (for a small booking fee) letting you print your tickets out at home! See www.iticketexpress.co.nz.

Hot soup, cheeseboards, mulled wine and tasty light meals have been added to the menu.

And we have new couches! Come and enjoy the back row — wide and comfy. Heaters have been donated and there are plenty of blankets!

A selection of the great films you can catch at Arthouse:

The Girl Who Played With Fire — Premiere Gala Opening Night Party, Wednesday 28 July

Second film in Stieg Larsson's critically acclaimed, million-selling Millenium Trilogy — a thrilling series about computer hacker, Lisbeth Salander, and journalist, Mikael Blomkvist.

Blomkvist has made his living exposing the crooked and corrupt practices of establishment Swedish figures. So when a young journalist approaches him with a thesis about sex trafficking in Sweden Blomkvist throws himself into the investigation.

He's had no recent contact with tattooed wild child Lisbeth, yet unbeknown to him, Salander has had contact with him via his hard drive. She takes matters into her own hands but is then accused of three murders, all connected to the exposé about to be published.

Thriller, Rated R16, 129mins. Swedish with English subtitles.

The Last Station (4 stars — Masterpiece Theatre; 2 Academy Award nominations)

After almost 50 years of marriage, the Countess Sofya (Helen Mirren), Leo Tolstoy's devoted wife, passionate lover, muse and secretary, suddenly finds her entire world turned upside down. In the name of his newly created religion, the great Russian novelist (Christopher Plummer) has renounced his noble title, his property and even his family in favour of poverty. A story of a grand old love and a passionate new one.

Drama, Romance. 112mins. Rated M — sex scenes. German/Russian/UK. English language.

London Assurance – National Theatre Live, London (5 stars, "Sparkling, uproarious comedy")

From Britain's most prestigious theatre comes a wickedly entertaining play, captured live in high-definition cinema. You can now experience world-class London theatre in New Zealand at Arthouse!

Sir Harcourt Courtly is lured away from the epicentre of fashionable London by the promise of a rich and beautiful rural bride, Grace, several decades his junior... only her charms are eclipsed by her hearty foxhunting cousin, Lady Gay Spanker. Sir Harcourt's son arrives in disguise escaping from his creditors and falls for the rustic venus... Grace. Written in 1841 by Dion Boucicault, an Irish comic genius writing at the time of Dickens.

Showing only on Saturday 24 July, 7pm and Sunday 25 July, 2pm.

Tickets \$28 seniors/children, adults \$33. Book now to guarantee a seat.

Support a Local in Okato

Leaky roof? Renovations? Hairdresser? Gardener?

Do you pick up the phone and call a company in New Plymouth when you need something? We have so many skills within our village now that we can actually get lots of what we need locally. We have now set up a community notice board of VILLAGE SKILLS at Seed Coastal Organics (opposite the coffee shop). This is to make people aware of the skills we have right on our doorstep. Please check the list to see if a local person can help you; we now have Builders, Electricians, Painters, Hairdressers, Holistic people and so so much more in the village. This is a new service so please keep checking for new skills appearing.

If you wish to be on the list please call in store and fill out a card to advertise your skills (free), whatever your skill may be someone may need that service - Sewing repairs, childcare, cleaners, tradesman – this is an opportunity to share your talents with the community.

So next time you have a need please check first if someone in the village can help, not only does it save you money in call out charges but you SUPPORT A LOCAL. Please help to keep our community thriving.

Thanks Lindsey at 'Seed Coastal Organics'.

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Time to Climb

Skill, drive, determination and a love of the outdoors are a few of the essential attributes for rock climbing.

Blair Hurley discovered the art of rock climbing when he describes himself as having an “early mid life crisis” back in 2001 and threw in his job as an electrician and trained to be an Outdoor Educator. Of all the outdoor aspects Blair was particularly drawn to the individuality of rock climbing.

The attraction of being outdoors was a given and the excitement of trying something new was the driving force. “There are so many other ways to make money and to be happy doing it at the same time is a bonus” says Blair. “There is more to life than working long hours, and hopefully not annoying clients still waiting for him to do jobs!!” he says.

Blair spent twelve months at WITT completing an Adventure Tourism course and another three months at OPC (Hilary Centre) completing a Certificate in Outdoor Education. “This course was life changing and it has cemented my passion for the outdoors”. Blair obtained qualifications which have lead to being able to teach rock climbing, caving, map reading, weather interpretations to name just a few.

Blair tells me he spent a lot of time as a child and adolescent tramping with his parents and the outdoors is what he loves.

He contracted himself to the YMCA in New Plymouth, helping to run the rock climbing wall for five years and having regular students from Francis Douglas College, New Plymouth Girls’ High School and Sacred Heart, whilst also working part time as an electrician in New Plymouth.

With a change in circumstances Blair made a move from New Plymouth to Okato. He found the drag of working for companies was getting too much and the decision was made to start up his own electrical business – Electrical 45 which is doing very well. (I was lucky to fit into his schedule!) Blair also tells me, “I thought the self employment would alleviate some stress..... but unfortunately that is not the case, my plan did not quite come to fruition. Hence the need to fit rock climbing in more often”.

“Rock climbing is a great way to escape the day to day hustle and bustle that life can push on you. It’s an opportunity to forget about work pressures, relieve stress, increase physical and mental strength, it’s a full mind, body and soul workout”.

Blair tries to get away every couple of months and over the past eight years has seen some beautiful parts of the north island. Taupo and west of Pio Pio offer stunning views, Pio Pio has fantastic limestone cliffs, ranging up to 80 metres high and of course more extreme days on Mount Taranaki. Eventually trips overseas are his big dream and expanding his ice skills.

Blair has also been working for Coastal Taranaki School (CTS) as a rock climbing/abseiling Instructor for the past two years working with the senior students of the school and visiting abseiling sites as well as the Opunake Gym Climbing Wall. “Working as a guide for Dam Drop Taranaki helps provide a bonus adrenalin rush!”

A field trip of late was to Wharepapa, east of Otorohonga. “The kids loved it and it is very self fulfilling to see others achieving what they underestimate they think they can’t do”. Wharepapa has become a “second home” over the past eight years. It is particularly well set for beginners and the place offers hundreds of climbs and a great cafe and campsite, all in the middle of nowhere.

“It all comes down to talking through ones fears and empowering the person – giving them the encouragement and having the ability to help them believe in themselves. Once they have completed the climb or abseil the buzz is incredible, for them and for me”.

“I think that kids these days need to be given the opportunity to push the boundaries and we must stop wrapping our kids up in too much cotton wool. Lets’ give our children the opportunities we had, like climbing trees, taking a few knocks. We learnt about self preservation”. Blair understands parents concerns about protecting their children, as he has four of his own,” but wouldn’t it be great if more of us encouraged and supervised our children when it comes to participation in activities that “may” pose a danger. In doing so, minimising any risk and also having good times with our kids.”

With such a passion for the sport Blair is keen and excited to expand on his rock climbing and incorporate group outings. Blair can work alongside varying abilities or even those whom have never climbed. For those of you whom have the experience the assistance would be much appreciated and not forgetting that extra help is always needed.

Blair would love to hear from anyone who may know of or who has a large rock protruding from their property that would be happy to allow accessibility. Blair is fully aware of the respect and privacy issues which would be upheld whilst on private property. He has one rock, about 10 metres high that he has been allowed to put permanent bolt “anchors” into. You may see his wagon on the side of the road. “I’m not being naughty” he says!

To have a venue that is easily accessible and handy is absolutely fantastic. Come share in this amazing sport and experience the “buzz”. Blair can be contacted 027 333 4409 or 7524942 email blairhurley@hotmail.com, although he admits to being a bit slack checking his emails!

By Milly Carr



Blair on top of Wharepapa . . .



. . . on Mt Taranaki . . .



. . . and at Mangaotaki, west of PioPio.

TOM Babies

Amélie Moore

Meet Amélie Sarah Moore, pictured here enjoying the late autumn sunshine. Amélie was born to Ida Staunstrup Moore and Jim Moore at Taranaki Base Hospital on 22 December 2009. Danish-born Ida has a marine biology degree from Swansea, Wales and a nursing degree from Plymouth, England. Before Amélie was born, Ida worked in the theatre at New Plymouth's Southern Cross Hospital, but for now she is enjoying the challenge of being a fulltime mum. She met Jim, who has Cornish and Swedish blood, in Swansea, where he was working on his civil engineering degree. Jim currently works for Transfield Worley as a civil/structural engineer. Ida and Jim were attracted to Taranaki by the surf and have found "a lovely community" in and around Okato village. They've lived here for almost a year now and are not planning to leave anytime soon.



Story and picture by Kerry Lilley

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Okato Playcentre

As part of our creativity and expression goal this term we took an excursion on a school bus to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and to the West Coast School of Rock. The bus ride itself was an absolute hit with the children —they felt just like big school kids.

First stop, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery to see the 'Songbirds' and 'Elephants For Sale' artworks. It was a brave band of mothers who took their pre-schoolers into the art gallery. The words "don't touch" and "don't run" hold little weight to a toddler in a building full of wide-open spaces, winding staircases, and colourful dangling artworks. Although mums gave chase in all directions after the one and two year olds, our fabulous art guide managed to fully engage the three and four year olds in a magical world of discovery, imagination, and movement as they explored the art on display. In keeping with the elephant-themed artwork the children were then given materials to create and decorate their own elephant ears to wear, and were guided through a dramatic elephant dance to inspirational music. The mothers then treated themselves to well deserved cappuccinos and muffins (nothing wrecked or broken in the whole place!) while the kids tucked into their morning tea.

Next stop, West Coast School of Rock, specialising in loud!!!! Our Coastal friend, Lisa Tahuaroa, welcomed us to her school. We were treated to some live musical pieces and vocals by the Rock crew, then out came the instruments. The hot favourites were the big drums and cymbals (that's where the loud comes in!). The Rock crew assisted the children with how to use things and then created beat patterns on the drums for the children to copy. A few mums were pleasantly surprised at their children's ability to imitate the rhythms so well. It seems there are quite a few budding musicians amongst us.

With the echo of drums still thumping in our heads we gratefully boarded the bus to take our small creative artists and little expressive musicians home for a nice long nap....

Coffee & Cupcakes OPEN DAY — Tuesday 27 July, 10am–12pm

If you are a bit curious about Playcentre, then here is your chance to check it all out. We are hosting a Coffee & Cupcakes Open Day in partnership with Nescafé Café Menu. You will be treated to frothy cappuccinos, lattes, mochas, etc. and there will be cupcake baking and decorating for the children, as well as our usual 16 areas of play!

You are welcome to join us anytime, just over the Stony River Bridge. For ages 0–6, sessions run 9.30am to 12.30pm Tuesdays and Thursdays during school terms. Contact Kerry on 06-752 8095 for more info.



Thomas, Tim and Orlando enjoy their 'big kids' school bus ride.



Dramatic elephant dance at Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.



On the drums at School of Rock.

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Michele Binnie ph. 0274 834 299.

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OKATO CLUBS & GROUPS

Playcentre

Main Road, Okato (over the Stony Bridge). Tuesday and Thursday, 9.30 - 12.30pm. Contact Rachel 752 4463.

Playgroup

St Luke's Hall, Main Road Okato. Wednesday morning, 10am - 12 noon. Contact Julie Moore 752 4277.

Plunket

Meet bi-monthly at Jaclyn Fisher's home. Contact Jaclyn 752 4872.

Okato Fire Brigade

Weekly. Monday night trainings, 7pm - 9pm. Contact Barry Harvey 752 4568.

Historical Society

Meets quarterly in the Community Trust Hall. Contact Iris Putt 752 4182.

St Patrick's Church, Okato

Daily mass 8.30am. Saturday evening mass 7pm.
Inquiries to Steak Goodin 752 8160 or Nora Fox 752 4062.

St Paul's Church

10am services. Congregate first and third Sunday of the month. Contact Jan Putt 752 4188.

New Zeal Church

Service 10.30am, Sundays at St Luke's Hall. Contact Angela and Kevin McFetridge 752 4993.

Okato Co-operating Parish Women's Fellowship

Meet bi-monthly, first Wednesday of the month in St Luke's lounge, 1pm. Contact Lorraine Whittle 752 4359.

Care and Craft

Get together Thursday fortnight at St Luke's lounge. 10.30am - 2.30pm. Contact Thea Fisher 752 4290.

Highway 45 Craft

Meet weekly on Monday mornings 10am - 12noon at members' houses. Contact Iris Putt 752 4182.

Tumahu Rural Women

Meet every second Wednesday of the month, 1pm at alternate members' houses. Contact Joyce Downes 753 4122.

Tumahu Golf Club

Roly Harvey 752 4314. Sunday: Mens golf day, Tuesday: womens golf day. Every 2nd Wednesday of the month: mixed golf.

JKA Karate, Okato

Monday and Wednesday 6pm - 7.30pm in Coastal Taranaki School Gymnasium. Contact Nicci 752 4529 or 027 259 6223.

Squash Club

Monday evening club night. Contact Steve Kelly 027 2333 229.

Tennis Club

Contact Maree Moffitt 752 8107 or Raewyn Lawn 752 4466.

Okato Bowling Club

Club day held every Sunday at 9.30am onwards.
President Bruce Peacock 752 4538, Secretary Fiona Liddall 752 4509, Convenor Cheryl Neilson 752 4218.

Okato Lions

Contact Merv Hooker, ph 752 4086.

Okato Pool

Learn to Swim - Tuesday and Thursday nights from 5.15 - 6pm.
Swim Club: Swimming Training - 6 till 7 - 7.30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. For more inquiries contact Fiona Lacey 752 4535.

St Peter's Guild

Meet fourth Friday of each month. Contact Angela Montgomery 752 7738.

Probus

Meet every third Friday at the Oakura Golf Club. Contact Margaret Hodges 752 1371.

Coastal Garden Circle

Meet every third Monday of the month. Contact Rae Hooker 752 4086.

Pony Club

Contact Carey Brophy, 752 4458.

Please contact Milly 752 4425 for any additional listings or amendments.