



Brittaney and Blake Carr enjoying the whole Weetbix Tryathlon atmosphere.

Weetbix Tryathlon

Friday 3 April saw Ngamotu Beach buzzing with nervous and eager children.

They were all awaiting the opportunity to perform in their part of the Weetbix Tryathlon, either as a team member or as an individual. The weather was absolutely spectacular, sun shining, no wind and a huge turnout of 1400 kids. Children from the ages of 7-15 years were separated into their individual age groups and each group was sent into the crisp waters of Ngamotu Beach to wade or swim through the calm waters. Then

we saw them run from the beach to their bike transition, where they rode their bikes along the back streets of Moturoa to Kawaroa, and back along the foreshore to Ngamotu. The last leg was a run to the finish line, staged on the grass area fringing the beach, where Valerie Vili presented Gold Medals to all of the participating children.

Prime Minister John Key made a visit to our great city and to the Tryathlon. My kids were very lucky to meet him personally and even shake his hand! "It was cool to meet him," Brittaney Carr

said. I totally agree with John Key's deliverance, that by keeping our children interested in sports and being active relates to the old saying "Getting them into sports keeps them out of courts!" It was great to see him in our province.

The Weetbix Tryathlon started in 1992 with one event at St Heliers, Auckland. The event has grown from those initial 500 participants to set the world record for the largest children's triathlon in 2009 with 18,959 participants.

(Continued on page 2)

editorial FROM THE TOM ZONE

As the year marches along, I find myself contemplating how important it is to make the most of every moment. While winter is the season of shutting down and taking things a little quieter, it never feels like time is going any slower. Why is that?

If time is going slowly does that mean life is less meaningful? If time is zipping by does that mean life is more meaningful? Is life speeding up because you realise that time and opportunities are slip sliding away so you cram more in?

Maybe it is not the pace at which you take life then, but possibly the importance of the things you do with your day. The things that are important to you could be catching up for a coffee with a busy friend, planting the winter veggies, reading the latest Lee Child book, tackling the pile of mending or cleaning the windows. Hardly meaningful things in the world or community sense but definitely capable of giving one a real sense of achievement.

Something that is turning my life into a bit of a merry-go-round for the winter months is the acquisition of the Fitzroy Voice, a community newspaper in Fitzroy. Tracey and I have re-branded it as the TOM Fitzroy. We are busy getting our new TOM baby off the ground and bringing another community the specific news that is happening in their neighborhood. Be on the lookout for it!

Kim



Weetbix Tryathlon

(Continued from page 1)



Valerie Vili was another popular athlete supporting the event.

Throughout its 16-year history, the event has attracted over 170,000 New Zealand children of all abilities. Two of those, Debbie Tanner and Andrea Hewitt, have gone on to represent New Zealand at the Olympics for triathlons.

Debbie Tanner was at the Tryathlon along with other athletes Valerie Vili, Hamish Carter and Andrea Hewitt. Valerie mentioned that it is great to see children participating in these events. "It gives them goals and something to focus on."

My kids thoroughly enjoyed the day as did many others from the coast, surrounding areas and children from Coastal Taranaki School. "It was pretty nerve-wracking at the start but as I was doing it I really enjoyed it. It was great to get to the finish line," said Brittaney.

The aim of the event is to give children an opportunity to give it a go, and to encourage happy, healthy lives. Well done, everyone who gave it a go!

By Milly Carr

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CHAT WITH PAT

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Rich Pickings

Hello all

I would like to take this opportunity to send out my condolences to Mr Condor's family and friends.

I would also like to make a plea to all those who use our roads please drive carefully.

As most of you will be aware there was a burglary of the Okato Squash Club a couple of weeks ago. To date I have had a great response from locals in relation to a red motor vehicle that may or may not have been involved. Keep the info coming.

I really should not have restricted my search to just a red vehicle, if you saw any suspicious vehicle in the area I would love to hear from you.

I read with interest of late some of the articles in the daily news relating to the ever increasing violence on our streets, and some of the bad publicity the Police have been getting.

Some thing I would like to bring to the attention of all is that the problem is not one just confined to New Plymouth and that a fair bit of my time of late has been tracking down and prosecuting Coastal lads for this exact type of behaviour.

Now while I accept that this is a Police matter and as such it is my problem, it is also your problem.

Why are we allowing our youth to drink to such an extent that they are incapable of acting in an acceptable way?

In saying that we cannot lock our kids up or be with them 24/7, so I think part of the solution is putting the responsibility back onto the kids.

If they think they are responsible enough to drink let them be responsible enough to take the consequences for their actions.

Some time ago I spoke to a number of families about the actions of their children only to get a complete denial that their child is capable of such a thing.

Now I am the first to say you should always be there for your child but don't put your head in the sand, he or she is only human and will make mistakes, be open with them and set some boundaries.

With all this in mind I would like to set up some sort of party line, whereby you contact me a number of weeks prior to your child having his or her birthday party, graduation party, what ever and we talk about what systems we can put in place to make it a safe night for all.

This system has been successful in some of the bigger centres so lets give it a go here.

Enough about the work how about those Hurricanes, it is no coincidence that they have been playing so much better with a Taranaki man at 1st five, I know he has hardly been here long enough to be called a Naki man but lets take him for now.

Also the Coastal A's continue to play some pretty good rugby. I was lucky enough to have the day off the other weekend and watched them just sneak home against NPOB, well done. For those of you that know me, you will know how hard that was to write!

Anyway must go.

PS: I still have some horse covers, a pair of paddles and have just had handed in a tool box, if you have lost any of those items give me a ring.

Take care and again please drive carefully, we as a community are far too highly represented when it comes to crashes on our roads.

Rich

Fire Brigade News

Time has flown as we've been kept rather busy at the brigade. We have had some call-outs, as a lot of you probably hear, in the middle of the night! Not so good having to attend so many fatalities and it is a reminder to everyone to "remember and treasure those people close to us".

It is coming into winter so remember to have your chimneys cleaned before you have a fire, and make sure you check your electric blankets. For those of you with little people about, keep those matches and lighters up high!

The Brigade will be purchasing extinguishers over the next few weeks and these will be available to purchase from the fire station - 2.3kg extinguishers for sale for \$60.00.

Be safe, be fire wise.

By Milly Carr

Fire Officer Profile Brian Hill, Deputy Fire Officer

When did you join the brigade?

1989.

Why did you choose to join the service?

To help the community.

What qualities do you think a person needs to bring to the service?

The ability to think quickly. Solve problems under pressure.

What have been the highlights for you?

Doing an Outward Bound leadership course through the fire service. Moving in to our new fire station. Meeting and helping others.

How do you feel when the siren/pager goes off?

You wonder what you are going to be involved in.

What has been your most embarrassing moment?

Getting my ute slightly stuck on the side of the road with the portable pump on the back while fighting the Warea Hall fire.

When did you become Deputy Fire Officer for the brigade and what does this role involve?

I became deputy in 2004. This role involves co-ordinating training and being involved in management decisions.

By Milly Carr.

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Steve Ralph: An Adventurer in Nepal

In March we met Steve Ralph, Director of TOPEC. This month, we discover Steve Ralph, trekker and Nepal Himalaya enthusiast.

The Himalayan Range or “Himalayas” for short is the youngest and highest mountain system in the world, and it’s still growing. It extends in an arc for 2,400km and a third of its 800km central section traverses Nepal. This section is known as the Nepal Himalayas and its mountainous north boasts eight of the world’s ten highest mountains, including Everest (8850m). The mountainous terrain, along with Nepal’s immense beauty and huge contrasts, make it a trumper and climber’s paradise. It is also one of the poorest countries on earth and a melting pot of races and tribes who face serious natural and environmental challenges. “It’s an amazing place,” enthused Steve, who loves the area and trekking so much, he’s visited five times.

His first trip, in 1998, was with his wife, Karla, to the Langtang Himal in the Central Himalaya Region. Protected as a National Park to conserve the unique flora and fauna there, Steve was captivated by Nepal’s beautiful and challenging landscapes and by the friendliness of the people, their history and culture. He was so taken that, when Karla and children Hope and India visit Karla’s family in the UK over the long, summer holidays, Steve returns to renew his love affair with the region.

In 1999 he visited the Rolwaling Himal, a remote, high valley running west to east just south of the Tibetan border. Home of the Sherpa people, it has remained basically unchanged for centuries. “We hardly saw a white face on that trip,” said Steve. Accompanied by a college friend, two porters and a cook, he set off to climb one of two “trekking peaks,” Ramdung Ri that, at 5900m, is the highest Steve has ever climbed. He still considers it one of his greatest achievements. They came uncomfortably close to a few avalanches and it was bitterly cold. “Temperatures got down to -25°C and everything, including the tent, froze. “My spoon even stuck to my lips,” Steve recalls. Breathing at that height was no picnic either, and he would wake at intervals throughout the night, feeling as though he was suffocating.

His next adventure, in 2001, saw him tackling the Annapurna Circuit. He hired a guide named Ashok who, in Steve’s words, “just wanted to chat up American chicks.” Ashok was drunk every night and got upset because Steve went too far, too fast. “I needed to walk for seven or eight hours, not four,” Steve complained, “and we did the circuit, which normally takes about twenty days, in twelve or thirteen.” It was during the Maoist uprising and they had a few bombs go off around them too!

Steve’s fourth trip was to the Khumbu region, which is home to Mt Everest or, as it’s locally known, Sagarmatha. Tourism has brought relative wealth to the area, and Steve told me that while

the buildings wouldn’t stand up in a decent earthquake and the people subsist in terms of food, they have designer clothing, cell phones and solar power. Steve’s goal for that visit was to fulfil his childhood dream of reaching Everest Base Camp, but first he had to survive the landing at Lukla’s Sir Edmund Hillary Airport. As it approached the runway after a spectacular half hour flight from Kathmandu, the tiny craft was buffeted by turbulence and, having landed, it taxied steeply uphill towards a sheer mountain wall...fast! Just in time, it seemed to Steve, the pilot braked and the aircraft slowed before making a sharp right hand turn and pulling up in front of the terminal building.

From Lukla it was a six-day trek to Gorak Shep, the last acclimatisation stop before Everest Base Camp. Then, on Christmas Day 2006, he set out. As he ascended the Khumbu Glacier leading away from Gorak Shep, he passed the memorial to Kiwi mountain guide, Rob Hall, who had lost his life while trying to save that of a client on Mount Everest in 1996. “That was a poignant moment,” he said. Four hours after leaving Gorak Shep, he reached his goal. “It was a spiritual experience and an amazing Christmas present,” Steve reminisced. On his way down Steve, too, helped a fellow traveller. He wore jeans and a woolly jersey, no hat and no gloves, and he seemed a bit confused and mildly hypothermic. Steve lent him the gear he needed and guided him back along the path to the village. His thankful companion rewarded him with a hot chocolate on their safe arrival. Back in Lukla, as his plane taxied towards the end of the steep runway which appeared to drop off into nowhere, Steve was a little happier than when he had flown in. “Either way, it was certainly an adventure!” he grinned.

Steve’s most recent trip was in 2008. Steeling his nerves, he flew into Lukla again and tramped to Gokyo (4750m), a small village comprised of a collection of stone cottages at the base of Gokyo Ri (Gokyo Peak, 5340m) that thrives on the trekking trade. Dotted along the valley adjacent to the village were five “holy lakes” which had recently frozen over in a bout of bad weather. When the sun hit the ice, “they sang and it sounded like whalesong,” Steve enthused, “and when the ice cracked, it sounded like a guitar string snapping...I had to look around to check whether there was a yeti there with me.” He stayed in Gokyo for ten days, taking side trips that included climbing two passes, Renjo La (5390m) and Cho La (5420m) and a trek to Cho Oyu Base Camp (5000m), which commanded the most spectacular views to be had of some of the world’s highest peaks - including Mount Everest. At the end of his trip, he enjoyed his usual shower, a clean set of clothes, a shave with a cut throat razor and a head massage. Then he farewelled Nepal for a fifth time.

“Will you be returning for more adventures?” I asked Steve. “I’ll probably take Karla and the kids next time,” he replied, “somewhere fairly mellow – probably to Khumbu. A few families go tramping there. They put the kids in baskets and carry them when they’re tired,” he said. Now there’s a great way to travel!

Story by Kerry Lilley

IMAGES BY STEVE RALPH



From Mong Ama Dablam.

By Dud Pokhari, near Gokyo with Everest in the distance.



Lions

Hello Readers

I am writing this in the car while Rae is in Pak N Save stocking up on supplies.

Our autumn weather is still with us and we do need a little rain at this time (23 April). The "girls" seem happy and our production is heading to break the record!

Our bike ride went off extremely well, with riders from near and far taking part. The ride this year started at the Warea Domain and wound its way up through farms towards the mountain. Then it was back to the domain for a barbeque and drinks. Our thanks to the riders, and to the farmers whose properties we went through. We also would like to say a big thanks to our guys who helped throughout the day.

TOPEC hut repairs are underway and we are hoping to have them completed by the middle of May.

Hopefully all the local phone books put out by the Okato Lions have been delivered by now.

At our meeting last month our new committee for the 2009-2010 year was elected. Last year I held the position of 3rd Vice President but somehow I have ended up as President for the upcoming year. (I will get my revenge during my term!!!)

Rae and I are heading for Canada and Alaska in mid May. As we're riding trains through the Rocky Mountains and cruising through the inside passage up to Alaska in early summer weather, we will think of you guys back home throwing another log on the fire.

Unsure if I'll be able to make the deadline for next month. If not, I will catch up with you the following month.

Take care until then

Lion Merv Hooker - 752 4086

Easter Bunny Visits Okato!!!

Our street was one of the lucky ones picked as part of the MORE FM Radio Station Easter Bunny competition. On Thursday 9 April the anticipation on the little ones' faces was price-less, and my kids were so excited about the pending visitor that it was almost as if Christmas had come early!!

The MORE FM Easter Bunny arrived in its black four-wheel drive. Out bounced the Bunny, skipping about and distributing eggs to all those living on Cumming Street.

On that very crisp morning (with snow covering the mountain and ranges!!) a running race warmed the muscles and an Easter egg hunt was great. Never mind that three year old who spied on the Bunny at all times while hiding the eggs. A three year old has no inhibitions!

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the morning visit and I'm sure there were a few tummies full of marshmallow chocolate eggs. Great breakfast, eh??

Thank you to MORE FM, and to the Taranaki Daily News who distributed newspapers for us all.

By Milly Carr



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TOM SPORTS

Relay for Life

Relay for Life is a wonderful, fun-filled overnight event involving tens of thousands of New Zealanders every year. The focus is to raise funds for the Cancer Society and the challenge is for teams to walk for 24 hours. The Relay for Life is a time to celebrate for those who have battled cancer and survived, and to remember the loved ones who lost their battle.

Each province hosts this event. Locally, the event was in March at the New Plymouth Racecourse. People of all ages and from all walks of life put together teams made up of family, friends, colleagues, or other groups. There were 90 teams in all.

Four local girls participated as part of the Coastal Taranaki School team, "Coastal Cruisers". Siobahn Manuel, Ashlin Dobbin, Shearyn Adlam and Saya Kobayashi (an exchange student from Japan) decided to participate in this event. Siobahn was inspired by her mother Kgystern, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2007. In addition to supporting her mother, Siobahn says her decision was also about supporting others with cancer, "To support those who have survived and those not so lucky."

The girls set about their fundraising, approaching teachers, family and friends. Funds raised by the Relay for Life help the Cancer Society continue its extraordinary work ensuring cancer survivors get access to free services, information and support from the moment of diagnosis right through to treatment and recovery.

The "Coastal Cruisers" team set themselves the goal of totaling how many laps they could complete over the 24-hour period. They measured this with what the team called their "clicker", a small device counting each lap as they completed their rounds. They then converted their laps into kilometres, which totaled 132 kilometres. Wow, what an effort!!

Over the course of the first day the event held an Idle for Life, an opportunity for teams to display their creative talents and present the crowd with a team performance. One of the team members, Mr Ted Normanton, worked diligently with the girls to produce an audible delight from "Ready Teddy and the Supremes" (these being the girls themselves). When it was time to hit the stage, the girls conveniently got "stage fright" and Siobahn's mum Kgystern and fellow walker/team mate Jacky had to assist Ted, not knowing what to sing or perform. It really must have been a sight and a good laugh!! The girls are still embarrassed about it today.

Over the 24 hours the girls enjoyed many aspects of the event but there were certain highlights for each of them.

Siobahn: "The team walks at the beginning and the end was amazing and the survivor walk where they let many doves fly away was quite emotional. There were lots of things."

Shearyn: "As soon as the day started was cool. The countdown to the finish and also the release of the doves."

Ashlin: "I also loved the beginning and end of the walk. I enjoyed the part when the lady went around and lit all the candles in remembrance of those who have not survived. The other part I cannot forget is getting my hair caught in the zip of the tent twice!!"

Saya: "I liked the final countdown where all the team members had to be on the course. What I didn't like was the coldness in the night."

The girls walked at 11pm and then they were up again at 3am to walk for an hour. "Over the 24 hour period we had six hours sleep. We needed to run a few times," said Shearyn, "as it was

really cold in the night and very windy." "It wasn't very pleasant, although it was better than last year when it rained the whole time," said Kgystern.

They are all very proud of themselves and found the entire event very worthwhile, even if they were tired out on the Monday morning and had to drag themselves to school for the day!

Well done everybody. You did yourselves proud!

By Milly Carr

Coastal Rugby

Rugby season has come around. Coastal Okato have got five teams this year they are:

Under 6s	Coached by Mark Beardmore & Mark Robinson
Under 7s	Coached by Darryl Neilson
Under 8s	Coached by Laine Greensill & Andrew Sillis
Under 12s	Coached by Fay Luckin & Tom Brophy
Under 13s	Coached by Paul Downes & Paul Wooldridge

Over all, numbers are good, but we still have room for anyone else who wants to give rugby a try.

Under 6s & 7s play Rippa Rugby.

Under 8s are progressing up to full tackle.

Under 12s & 13s are full on.

The season started on Saturday 2nd May so keep an eye out in the daily news on each Thursday to see where the teams are playing on Saturday morning. Any enquires phone Tom Brophy 752 4150. We cater for ages 4yrs through to 12yrs

Riding for Disabled

On Saturday 4 April the Riding for the Disabled held their Taranaki Regional Games day in the Hawera show grounds. The games were for disabled children from New Plymouth to Whanganui. It was a great day for all to get together and have fun.

The day started with a nice morning tea. Then the Riding Games started. The teams were sorted and got their colours. Amid lots of clapping and cheering, the riders, some with assistance, rode their horses around drums, posted mail and had to drop bags into buckets. Everyone had a lovely potluck lunch and chats. After lunch the Games continued with the teams competing in other skill testing games, including racing to dress up as Indians.


At the conclusion there was prize giving with ribbons for first, second and third, and a shield for the winning team. Jessie MacDonald won two ribbons, one for 2nd and one for 3rd. The New Plymouth team won the shield.

It was a happy day for all!

By Keith Watkins

Okato Swimming Club

A big thank you to our local butchers Graeme and Dee of "Coastal Meat Processors" for their very kind donation of sausages each Thursday evening, our race night at the pool. All the kids and adults thoroughly enjoyed these. For most it was our dinner for the evening!



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Locals compete in the Port Taranaki World Tri Festival

The World Tri Festival has been run in New Plymouth for the past four years. On Saturday 4th April, some Okato residents had a go. Dave Lilley was one of them. He ran the Standard Triathlon – a 1.5km swim followed by a 40km bike ride and a 10km run. He had been training for months: He had cycled for hours at a time, got up before dawn to swim lengths at the Okato Pool, struggled to run a few kilometers without stopping and finally, he had combined the disciplines sequentially. He had suffered back pain, a groin strain and excruciating leg cramps in the dead of night. He had also enjoyed his first therapeutic massage, experienced a Bowen treatment and become conversant with sports' supplements.

Meanwhile, the Okato Veterinary Clinic Team had prepared for their event. Dave's son, Callum Lilley, was their swimmer. Responding to friendly encouragement from Team Manager Di Klever, he had occasionally trained at Kawaroa Park Pool. And while Pete Morgan had clocked up kilometres on his bike, Jon Taylor had clocked them up on foot.

Race day arrived and with it, Dave's turn to launch himself into the sea at Ngamotu Beach. After two laps round a marker buoy in the inner harbour, he pedaled along Centennial Drive and Surf Highway 45 to Timaru Road and back. And finally, he negotiated the running course, much of it along New Plymouth's iconic walkway.

The team had started their race about 20 minutes after Dave. However, when Dave crossed the finish line 3 hours 59 seconds after setting out, Jon was only seconds behind him. The team had clocked in at 2 hours 44 minutes to secure 5th placing from the 13 teams competing in their event.

Other Okato residents to tackle the course were Nicola Jones, who completed the "393" or Beginners' Race (300m swim, 9km bike ride and 3km run) and Brohn Torckler, who completed the Standard Male race for 50-54 year-olds in a time of 2hrs 34 minutes; the 4th home of 11 contestants in his section.

Congratulations to them all.

Story and picture by Kerry Lilley



Successful Okato Vet Clinic triathlons from left, Callum Lilley, Jon Taylor, Di Klever (Manager), Pete Morgan and Dave Lilley.

Okato Squash Club

Recently, 16 year-old Jordan Linn took out the Okato Four Square and Sinclair Electrical B Grade Tournament. In an energy-sapping final, Jordan (C1) beat Chris Robertson (Hamilton, B2), 3 sets to 1. A crowd crammed the third court viewing area to watch the final. Local support for fifth seed JD was fantastic as he dug in for the upset of the tournament. Jordan's march to the final saw him win victories over Daniel Charteris and Pete Morgan.

The Ladies' draw was won by Maree Bennett of Hawera, who upset top seed Amy Simpson of Okato. The Easter Tournament welcomed back some of the old regulars with 68 entries, including a graded section, a junior section and a social section. Other notable local performances included the following: Brooke Gray fought hard in the Men's Division 3 final to eventually lose to Wayne Innes from Auckland. Shelly Hooker played well, coming runner-up in Women's Division 3 to Christy Colville from Hawera. In Men's Division 4, Tony Gawler was runner-up to Hawera junior Simon Corbett.

Results:	Men's Division 1:	1st: Jordan Linn, Okato 2nd: Chris Robertson, Hamilton 3rd: Steve Bennett, Hawera
	Men's Division 2	1st: Jeff Ansell, Inglewood 2nd: Brian Simpson, Okato 3rd: Richard Washington, Foxton
	Men's Division 3	1st: Wayne Innes, Auckland 2nd: Brooke Gray, Okato 3rd: Mal Honeyfield, Okato
	Men's Division 4	1st: Simon Corbett, Hawera 2nd: Tony Gawler, Okato 3rd: Nick Greensill, Okato
	Women's Division 1	3rd: Maree Bennett, Hawera 2nd: Michelle Habib, Kawaroa Park 3rd: Amy Simpson, Okato
	Women's Division 2	1st: Sharon Nuku, Opunake 2nd: Peggy Lawn, Opunake 3rd: Tracey Dando, Okato
	Women's Division 3	1st: Christy Colville, Hawera 2nd: Shelly Hooker, Okato 3rd: Debra Mullin, Okato
	Juniors' Division 1	1st: Joe Brophy, Okato 2nd: Ben Brophy, Okato 3rd: Steve Gibson, Okato
	Juniors' Division 2	1st: Trent Brophy, Okato 2nd: Thomas Morgan, Okato 3rd: Grace Greensill, Okato

Our next event is the annual FBT and RD1 Farmers Tournament in the second week of May. You don't have to be a member and need only an association with farming, which we all have in Okato. Give Lynn Putt a call on 7524033.

Club Inquiries to: President, Peter Morgan, phone 7527455
Secretary, Darryl Gibson, phone 7524804

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*India Ralph
with her pet
guinea pig.*



Madison Smyth on her pony.

Coastal Taranaki Pet Day

Horses, dogs, cats, chickens, guinea pigs and even an ant farm came to school for the junior school integrated "Pet Day". The junior team organised a wonderful afternoon for our little pet owners.

A few creative alternatives arrived on the day. Kade Van der Heyden brought along his chocolate mouse and Carys Puller had a duck she made out of kitchen utensils.

Horses gave rides to children. Dogs, some small and some very large, paraded around a ring. All behaved well on the day and it was fantastic to see such a variety of pets and so many parents at our school.

Waikirikiri Lagoon Project

Our year 7 and 8 classes at Coastal Taranaki School have been selected to take part in an important monitoring project at the Waikirikiri Lagoon on Komene Road. We have been working with Nathan Hills from Puke Ariki to complete surveys of the wildlife in the area.

Students have had access to training and the use of some very sophisticated equipment. Groups have set traps in the water, put tracking tunnels on the land and used water chemistry tools to assess the state of the lagoon.

Waikirikiri Lagoon is listed as nationally significant and this is a benchmark project for the Taranaki Regional Council. It is hoped that our students will develop knowledge of their local environment and a sense of ownership of this place. They are being encouraged to study what is there now and think towards a future that they can help protect.



*Jurnee Brown, KC McAlister and Nathan Hills doing
water chemistry at Waikirikiri lagoon.*

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Village Health is directed by Liz Jury, Naturopath, and Meegan Care, Holistic Therapist and Counsellor, both local practitioners with strong experience in their particular fields. This is an exciting opportunity to be in on the ground floor of a vibrant natural health centre.

There are limited spaces available and we will seek to cover the best mix of practitioners, if you are interested please contact Liz Jury 06 752 4213.

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LYN JURY

Telephone Exchange Part 3

There were private lines and party lines. Sometimes, there were 8 or 10 subscribers on a party line but Warea had 14, which was the most "subs" on any line that Lorraine knew of. People on a party line could, and did, listen to each others' conversations. I was talking to Anne Barron recently and she told me how she and Ray spent hours courting via telephone. "I was fifteen at the time and we had to be very careful what we said," she told me, laughing.

A special card was used for toll calls. On it was recorded the subscriber's name and phone number, and the phone number that had been requested, along with the code of its exchange. As soon as the call had been answered, the operator fed the card into a "calculograph" and clocked the call on by pulling a lever. He or she then had to listen in from time to time to make sure that the people were still talking and, when they had finished, would pull the lever again to clock the call off. The operator then completed the form, signed it and sent it to Palmerston North, where the details were recorded on the caller's monthly toll bill. Finally, the bill was returned to base for the operators to fold and send out.

The operators were also responsible for answering emergency fire or accident calls. "We had to get all the details before we sounded the alarm," Lorraine recalls, "because after the siren (which was attached to coastal Motors) had been set off, we couldn't hear a thing." The first person to arrive at the station would pick up the phone to ascertain the details of the emergency and often, there'd be calls from the pub or the football club or the bowling club to find out where it was. Lorraine told me the story of one guy who, apparently out of curiosity, rang from the pub to find out the whereabouts of the latest emergency. "He was told it was an oven fire at so-and-so's house and it turned out to be his. He probably, went home," she mused

Sometimes, people treated the exchange like an information centre. They would ask what time the plane or the railcar arrived in New Plymouth and Lorraine would ring New Plymouth Taxis to find out. "When I relayed the information to the caller, they'd think I was really clever," she joked. A couple of particularly strange questions stand out in her memory. Once, a woman requested where one might purchase a small can of green paint to paint a child's bicycle. On another occasion, when the power was due to be cut for a few hours one Sunday, a woman wondered when she should put her "chook" in the oven in order to have it ready for tea.


People also left messages when they were going out to tea or to the movies, when they were going away overnight or on holiday. The vets and the doctor, especially, relied on the operator to transfer calls when they were going out locally and when there was no doctor available in the area, Lorraine would swot up who was on duty in New Plymouth so she could let people know. "They were always appreciative of the service and it wasn't uncommon to receive a small gift of biscuits or chocolates at Christmastime," she said.

As an operator, Lorraine was expected to use standardised expressions, which the post master was obliged to monitor at regular intervals, from his office. In addition, an inspector would visit from time to time and sit at a table in the corner, listening to proceedings. "It could be awkward at times," Lorraine explained, because she was familiar with her "subs'" voices and their phone numbers. One day when she was being inspected, she answered a call, "Number and name, please?" as per protocol. "This chap got a bit awkward and used some colourful language," she reminisced. "He knew I knew the answers already but I could hardly explain that there was an inspector sitting in the corner!" On another occasion, Lorraine lost her sub's call because she didn't answer quickly enough. When he complained, she invited him to come and have a go. About 15 minutes later, he arrived to see who had invited him along. The sympathetic postmaster didn't reveal which operator he had been talking to and the sub never did give the job a try.


The last twelve months of the exchange's existence were tough. Staff were not allowed holidays and because some of the most skilled operators left and no further permanent staff were being employed, there were a lot of temporary staff to be trained by those who remained. Added to that, it could be difficult to hear on some of the lines while the automatic lines were being installed. Stress levels were high and according to Lorraine, "Some people were on medication for their nerves."

Lorraine was on duty the day the board went automatic. At about 11 o'clock on the morning of 14 May 1975, the exchange was ceremoniously switched over to an automatic operation and the event was broadcast via the local radio station. "Straightaway there was so much clicking and clacking that the technicians wondered whether the whole thing was about to fail," Lorraine recalled. "Everybody was trying it out!.....You could tell when the (manual exchange) board was alive and when it was dead, and when it went auto, it just went dead." Eight skilled workers had just lost their jobs and Lorraine had witnessed the end of an era.

By Kerry Lilley



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Okato Playcentre

On a lovely sunny day in March we ventured out on Chaddy's Charters with Chaddy and his faithful dog. We had a great few hours on the sea watching the seals sunning themselves on the rocks and showing off their swimming skills.

We have a few skippers amongst our children. They got to have a drive of Chaddy's boat and to wear his hat!! Some didn't quite get their sea legs, and a few were even rocked to sleep! So all and all, a memorable day was had by everyone. Thank you, Chaddy.

Back at Playcentre, we've been enjoying our own playcentre grown corn and cucumbers for morning tea. The kids have made awesome Easter baskets that I'm sure got filled with lots of Easter eggs. They also had fun making Easter biscuits that were a real treat. The sandpit is always full of children (and Mums), digging huge holes and making rivers, mountains and volcanoes. The fun is just endless.

For further information contact Rachel on 752 4463

By Marlene Goodreds

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