

TOM okato



Robin shows off his finished catamaran.

Robin Hall realises a retirement dream

Robin Hall has always been interested in boats. "We grew up around water," he says. As a child living in Auckland's Point Chevalier, his family almost always had boats and used to fish extensively out on the Manukau Harbour. The family also owned a bach at Huia. His Mum and Dad were both keen fisherpeople and, under their watchful eye, the children would fish there too.

When he came to the coast as an electrical supervisor during construction of the offshore Maui A platform (he was there when the first meal was served on board), the sea and fishing has continued to hold a spell over him. Sitting with him in his office which is perched high in his shed, I notice a 1996 "NP Sport fishing and Underwater Club Inc" magazine. On the cover there is a

full size photo of Robin, together with son, Tony, fishing from Robin's boat, "Exocet," a six metre mono hull with a 150hp Johnson motor. There was a large fish draped across the deck. "See that?" Robin asks, rhetorically. "It's a 119kg striped marlin." "And here's an interesting story," he adds. "We were

(Continued on page 3)

editorial FROM THE TOM ZONE

People like reading about people they know. People like to see their local businesses supporting their community. People will show support to a business after the business has made an impression and a commitment to be part of the community.



At TOM we know these things because we are in the business of supporting communities as individual groups; keeping people informed and entertained. It never ceases to amaze me, the interesting stories that come through our publications about present and past locals. In this economic climate we are given an opportunity to enjoy our neighbours and we like writing about our neighbourhoods and being in a position to share this good stuff with others.

If you treasure TOM in Okato and would like to show your support in a financial way - business or a local then get in touch with us. We can explain how your \$50 can benefit everybody and we thank all the businesses who already do support us.

Next issue and we will be into Spring – the joy of it!

Tracey

Okato Community Library gets the thumbs up



Lesley Dowding.

Lesley Dowding is known to Okato residents as a writer and storyteller, but she is also a literacy consultant to schools where she trains teachers in effective teaching. Lesley has a passion for literacy and, naturally, for books. A lot of her work is done in libraries around the country and she herself is the teacher librarian at John Bosco School.

Lesley has spent the last 18 months working with the CEO of Puke Ariki to open the community library in Okato during the school holidays. The reason for this is so the children and the families in the district have access to the fabulous library resources and programmes that are organised around the country.

Lesley went to Wellington last summer for the children's reading programme there. These programmes help children continue reading even after school. The research shows how important this is for their learning. Lesley is aware that lots of young families have arrived in the area and she has run courses for Plunket on the need babies have for books. The library will be great for these families too.

In order for the library to stay open, Lesley submitted a plan to the Council which was read and heard last month. Lesley has just received a letter that the proposal has been accepted and money will be set aside for the library to stay open. She is very excited about this news and has informed the Coastal Taranaki School principal since that is where the community library is based.

This means that the library can offer more to retired people as well, and maybe book clubs can be held there. It definitely means that writers and illustrators will be able to visit our library under the Puke Ariki scheme. Lesley will be working with Coastal Taranaki School and Puke Ariki.

TOM dates for September

Copy and ads deadline – 21 August

Distribution – 9 September



TOM-OKATO is a free, monthly publication, delivered on the second Wednesday of the month to all homes and post-boxes from Timaru Road to Bayly Road.

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Points of view expressed in contributed articles are not necessarily the views of TOM

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Robin Hall realises a retirement dream



Robin demonstrates his modified saw bench.

about twenty miles offshore in that photo. It was shitty weather and we were thumping our way back to port when I noticed a boat coming up behind us and making better time in the rough conditions. It was a twin-hulled cat that passed us." It set Robin thinking... and from thinking grew a dream...

The road towards the fulfillment of Robin's dream began with his spending a lot of time on the phone to different boat designers and then going round the country to places as far flung as Tauranga, Auckland and Christchurch looking at boats of similar style. It took a long time to decide what he wanted, but then he saw Allan Tattersfield's "Tawhiti Tattoo," designed by Roger Hill of Auckland. It became his "inspiration;" he bought the plans and, in 1999, he launched his boat building project.

He started building it in the sizeable shed on his property that had once been part of Peter Liddall's Coastal Transport business. However, after constructing the hull, he found the space a bit tight and had to abandon boat building for a year while he built an extension that would accommodate the boat on its specialised trailer, with a minimum clearance of four metres. "The trailer was a work of art itself," Robin reckons. It was purpose built in Auckland, 10m long by 3m wide, 850kg and entirely aluminium. "We towed it back to Taranaki in 2001, on the back of Tony's Nissan Safari, and it towed beautifully."

In preparation for the next stage, Robin had to build some specialised machinery. The floors, cabin tops and decks were to be made by laminating special, structural foam sheets between layers of ply, for which Robin devised a vacuum pumping system, which removed the air from large plastic bags containing the pre-glued foam and the ply, effectively pressing them together. He also built an upside down saw bench with its own motor and blade and mounted it on top of his existing saw bench to facilitate cutting timber up to 200mm thick. Only then was he ready to start on his boat again.

Robin's cousin, Malcolm Hall, helped during the next construction phase. A cabinetmaker by trade, he would come down from Auckland and stay for a week at a time, helping with "the tricky parts". It was during this phase, when the boat was up on the trailer in the new shed area, that Robin slipped, fell off his ladder and fractured both heels. He was working by himself at the time and says he screamed his head off. Luckily, daughter Sue was at home next door and heard him. "They poked me so full of morphine I freaked out on it," Robin recalls. "I saw coloured lights all over the ceiling and then they couldn't wake me." He had his heels pinned and screwed, was off his feet altogether for five months and on crutches

after that. The pins and screws were removed after a year but he was off boat building for two. In fact, he's been limited in what he's been able to do ever since. He's off to the specialist in Auckland again soon, to see if there's anything more that can be done for him.

It was after his accident, when he couldn't stand, that Harry Vear of Patuha Lodge came to his aid and helped complete the painting. "Harry was in partnership in "Fibreglass Marine" in Auckland. He was a great help to me," Robin attests. "We started building the eight metre cats at about the same time. I was second to buy a set of plans and the last one to finish one," he tells me. "Harry and his partner built about fifteen of the same design, but in pure fibreglass." Malcolm and Harry both helped Robin in a tangible way, but there is another person Robin wants to acknowledge. "I mustn't forget my wife," he says, smiling. "Phyllis has always been supportive."

In May this year, the boat was finished. A twin hull (catamaran), it is 9.2 metres tip to tip and 2.9 metres wide. It has two 135hp Metrocruisers with Alpha 1 stern legs and a fuel capacity of approximately 700 litres. It is fully equipped with a four burner gas cooker with oven and grill, fridge, freezer, hot and cold fresh water, two 80W solar panels (to help charge the batteries), shower, toilet and sleeping for four at a pinch. It also has a Raymarine Radar, chart plotter GPS, depth sounder, VHF radios, and an anchoring system that can be operated from within the boat. The construction is glass over ply and there are virtually no nails or screws – it's all glued and fibreglassed.

Launching day finally arrived, but yet another problem became evident when it came to getting the boat to the water. Trailer laws demand that the trailer and boat together, with fuel and water on board, weighs less than 3500kg. But the all-up weight is 5080kg, so Robin leaves his boat in New Plymouth at Tasman Marine. Will she outclass the performance of his previous boat, "Exocet?" Robin is confident. She is still being run in and hasn't had a chance to properly prove herself yet. Nevertheless, she cruises comfortably at 20 knots and will, hopefully, have a maximum speed of close to 30 knots.

It has taken a huge amount of planning and hard work, but by far the hardest part of the project, according to Robin, has been choosing a name for the finished vessel. Robin has finally settled on "Drago". If you're down at the port or out on the briny, look out for her. But don't try to beat her home.

Story by Kerry Lilley



Robin and his principal supporter, Phyllis.

“Bringing home the bacon” – Swine Flu in Okato!

With all the media attention focusing on the swine flu pandemic here and abroad, I spoke to a local who probably experienced it first hand. A trip to Melbourne for local farmer Daryl Gibson and his wife Ali left them with more than they had bargained for.

A five day trip at the end of June became a little more than just that! Daryl and Ali were both aware that swine flu was gaining traction in Australia, most notably in the state of Victoria. Though this was in the back of their minds they felt reasonably well assured that in such a big city the chances of contracting the swine flu would be pretty minimal. Daryl did, however, joke with family members that he “would get them a dose of swine flu instead of something from the duty free”.

Thirty-six hours after returning home Daryl started to feel unwell. “I woke up at two in the morning with a fever, the shakes and the inability to warm up and the duty free joke started to look a little less funny. Bacon flavoured expletives were exchanged across the matrimonial bed. The following five days were not my finest as I slowly notched up each of the symptoms on the influenza leaflet I picked up at the airport. There was severe headaches, chills, fever, aches, nausea, lack of appetite, coughing up phlegm and blood coupled with significant fatigue. From what I have read, there is little difference between swine flu and standard seasonal variety. They are both rubbish.

Daryl contacted the local GPs at the Oakura Medical Centre and kept in regular contact with the nurses. They reassured him that if he could breathe easily and had no underlying health problems such as asthma, he had nothing to worry about. They advocated self-isolation, recommended regular paracetamol to reduce fever symptoms and to consume plenty of fluids. At the time of Daryl’s bout of (probable swine) flu the ‘National Pandemic Plan’ had moved from the containment phase to one of management, and hence swabs were no longer being routinely collected. Therefore Daryl will never know exactly what he had but said, “I am hoping that it was swine flu so then I can relax when others start coming down with it.”

Daryl said, “I guess once you do have the flu of any sort, it’s your responsibility to mitigate the chances of passing it on.” The local nurses suggested Ali and Daryl wear masks when they were around one another, sleep in separate rooms, be extra careful with eating utensils and the like and regularly wash their hands with warm soapy water, and for Daryl to avoid contact with anybody outside the immediate home. “Although I was a little skeptical it obviously worked and hopefully my little virus stopped with me.” Daryl was fortunate to have his parents living across the road and they carried out the vital farm chores for him.

I would like to think that people are better educated and prepared for if or when this does happen to them. As according to Daryl, “Although the virus is mild it is no fun.”

Medical Centres recommend you stay at home if you do have flu-like symptoms. Treat the symptoms, ensure you have plenty of fluids, regular Panadol and keep yourself warm. If you have any difficulty with breathing such as shortness of breath or wheezing, they recommend you make a trip to hospital.

The National Healthline is another source of information available 24 hours a day on freephone 0800611116.

By Milly Carr

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Fire

Okato Fire Brigade

We missed the last TOM and all has been fairly busy for the Brigade. We held our AGM on 6 June with a good turnout. Our new station acts as a great venue for such occasions with its excellent kitchen and decent sized social area.

Barry Harvey (CFO- Chief Fire Officer) thanked all members, families and partners within the brigade for their contributions. The brigade is working well together as a team, updating and improving its abilities. There have been good turnouts for Monday night practices.

There have been quite a few call-outs of late and some could be avoided if more care was taken. Please remember for those of you travelling along the all familiar SH 45, one area is particularly hazardous. The Lower Timaru Road corner at Tataraimaka is a very dangerous piece of road and we have had multiple calls to this same area. Slow down!

Smoke Alarms:

Install them and check their batteries. There have been several instances in which batteries weren't charged to their fullest. Always have spare batteries on hand. If you don't have alarms, get them!! No excuses, we have them at the brigade at \$15.00, including the battery. We can even install them for you.

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Be safe, be fire wise.

By Milly Carr



CHAT WITH PAT

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Sol Vallis views extremesports through a camera lens

Okato Pony Club

As Pony Club is currently in winter hiatus, I just thought I would let you know about some changes that have happened since the end of our season and what the new season will bring.

At our end of the season, Malcolm Grayling stood down as our head instructor after years of loyal and much loved service. At our Potluck dinner held on the 12 June, we made both Malcolm and Mary Honorary Patrons of the club. We would like to thank them for the huge contribution that they have made over the many years they have been involved with Okato Pony Club.

We are very fortunate to have Matthew Grayling accept the position as our new head instructor, and thank him for taking on the role.

We are holding our opening rally on Sunday, 13 September starting at 10am. If you require any additional information regarding Okato Pony Club, please contact Carrie Brophy on 7524458.

Okato Tennis Club

By the time this goes to print most of the fencing around the four tennis courts will be completed. Over the last two years the replacement of the two top courts has cost over \$50,000, repainting the Club house \$1,000 and the almost completed fencing \$18,000.

This has been funded by generous grants and donations from New Zealand Community Trust, TSB Community Trust, Southern Trust, Trusts Charitable, New Plymouth District Council, the awesome Okato Lions Club, donations from Community members and fundraising by members of the Tennis Club. However we now find ourselves with a shortfall of up to \$5,000.

We would like to complete the fencing and are now asking if the Okato Community can support us with donations or debentures of \$100 to enable us to finish the project. If you would like to help us please forward your donation or debenture to Raewynne Lawn, 130B Mangetete Road, RD 37, Okato 4381. A receipt will be issued and debentures will be repaid over the next 12-24 months from fundraising activities planned.

Last season was a very successful year for us with four midweek ladies teams competing, one junior school team and a team entered in the A3 grade. Congratulations to one of our midweek ladies teams for winning their section. Other teams also placed well with a fourth and fifth placing. Keep up the good work and we look forward to another great season of tennis this summer.

If you are interested in playing tennis we are always keen to introduce new members to the "tennis bug". Contact either Raewynne on 752-4466 or Maree on 752-8107.



Monique and Sol at home with their boys, Shem (left) and Sid.

Sol Vallis is an adventurer. He's been an adventurer ever since he can remember. His grandfather owned three farms, one in the Waikato, another in Reporoa and a third in Raglan, and he owned three planes - a Tiger Moth, an Auster and a Cessna 180 - to commute between them. Sol flew round with his grandfather from the time he was a little dot and some of his earliest childhood memories are of sitting on his grandfather's knee, flying his planes. As a consequence, perhaps, Sol wanted to be a pilot. But he couldn't afford it and did a welder's apprenticeship instead. The skydiving industry, along with adventure tourism, was just beginning to take off and one of Sol's workmates was a skydiver, who ran weekend "first jump" courses. Sol did his first jump in 1980 and after that, he was hooked; skydiving became a hobby, along with surfing and ocean diving and pig hunting. He's been skydiving for 25 years now and has done 10,000 jumps.

Sol didn't plan a career in the industry. "It was never my ambition; it just happened," he says. It all started from skydiving and filming tandem jumps; there weren't enough experts anywhere "so kiwi boys got to be instructors and cameramen." Eventually, Sol gave up filming tandems and crossed over into filming. He does commercials, mostly. "I did one for a Japanese rice beer company where I had to skydive down the side of Mount Aspiring and that led to more jobs in film," he tells me. Recently, Sol filmed a friend BASE jumping for the new Alexis advertisement and, acting as the ultimate Dad for an upcoming \$2 shop chain ad, he jumped out of a helicopter to deliver his son's school lunch.

Sol's work isn't limited to commercials, though. He's also been



An exit for a wingsuit jump from Terror Peak.

on the Discovery Channel and has worked on a Hollywood movie called "The Extreme Team." The movie revolved around a group of extreme athletes, doing what they love to do best and the dialogue included frequent references to the extreme team. Unfortunately, the phrase had already been claimed by the World Federation of Wrestling and the film was canned. The amount of money that had been spent on the project was considerable but the movie was, to put it in perspective, a low budget one. "They were big earners, big spenders," says Sol, "and they were happy to regard the experience as a good holiday." But for Sol, it was "one out of the bag."

Red Bull (the energy drink company) spends a lot of money on their extreme athletes, collectively called "The Red Bull Airforce" and Sol went BASE jumping in Fiordland for two weeks with them in February, exploring new jumping sites. "I'm probably the only Maori BASE jumper in the world," he quips. BASE jumping involves jumping off land based structures using a parachute alone, or a bat-like wingsuit and then a parachute. BASE is an acronym that stands for the four categories of fixed objects from which exponents jump – buildings, antennae, spans (bridges) and earthen structures, and athletes are awarded "BASE numbers" when they have jumped from at least one object in each category. Well known Kiwi BASE jumper, Chuck Berry, declares that BASE jumping is "stupid." You have to knock over four barriers to succeed; "the fear of not performing, the fear of being in space, the fear of falling and the fear of your equipment not working properly."

Red Bull's website <http://www.redbull.co.nz> describes their recent "Uncharted" mission as "bringing together an eclectic and humorous group of talented individuals" for "the project of a lifetime." Part of their mission involved jumping from two previously unjumped peaks deep in Milford Sound. The first was from Terror Peak, a 3,600 granite pillar that rises from Milford's valley floor and is, according to Sol, "one of the biggest jumps in the world." "You freefall off there for 45 seconds." The second was from Sinbad, the highest peak in the Sinbad gully. Not only did the group, which included

Chuck Berry, parachute from these peaks, they wingsuited from them too, increasing the freefall time to in excess of 30 seconds. At least Chuck and some of the other guys had the luxury of choosing when to jump; Sol and the other cameramen had to jump behind them ready or not, if they were to capture the action. "I filmed the lot!" Sol announces with satisfaction.

Sol has also been working for Maori Television, on a programme called "Hunting Aotearoa." Friends of his who own a safari park out the back of Eltham called "Wildlife Properties" are doing hunting trips and eco-tourism there. "It costs \$2,000 to fly the helicopter there and back and \$5,000 to shoot a bull!" Sol exclaims. His interest in the venture itself is non-financial "but I'll get work out of it," he says. "I become stunt man, guide, host and I also have the PR skills." Matt Newton asked him to take a crew from Maori Television, including Howard Morrison Junior, out there recently. Matt helicoptered them in and Sol guided them on a mission up the top of the Moeawatea River to shoot bull and deer. "We managed to shoot a bull and a stag between eight people and we got it all on footage," he says. The documentary will air in about three months' time: "It's a big thing to show what Taranaki has to offer."

Sol has been visiting the Taranaki coast for 25 years or so now, visiting Pete Northcott and chasing the surf. Together with Monique and their two boys, Sid and Shem, he has lived on Surf Highway 45 near Pungarehu for about four years now. Sol and Monique bought their property, complete with astrological observatory building, from Tom Whelan. They tried to negotiate for the mirrors too but, according to Tom, they were worth more than the property itself. I asked why on earth they would come here from Raglan for the surf. Raglan's surf was too crowded, Sol replies. Besides, property prices were out of control there and he could buy something here that was near 60 surf breaks. "There's no stealing, no intimidation, and it's safe to bring up a family. It's a lifestyle choice," he says. There is a full on view of the mountain from their front door, a middle distance view of the sea from the back and intense green lahars all around. Beautiful? Except for that mean South Easterly, it's almost perfect!

Story by Kerry Lilley

Sol films his friend, extreme skier and BASE jumper, Shane McConkey, who died earlier this year while BASE jumping in the Italian Dolomites.





COASTAL TARANAKI SCHOOL

Inline hockey and Coastal equals Fun!

In the school holidays the Ravens Inline Hockey Club hosted the 5th Annual Junior Tournament and numerous children from Okato participated.

For some, participation meant a gold medal like Josh Gibson and Callum Hurley, who play for the U14 One team and Hayden Luckin, Jess Gibson and Taila Hurley who play for the U10 team – a very pleasing result for the Club and the kids and their parents. For others it was just great fun getting out and playing. They say inline hockey is one of the fastest sports you can play using your own steam and all the players come off the rink steaming!



U14 Ravens Gold Medal winning team. Middle row, second to left, Josh Gibson and back row, third from right, Callum Hurley.



U10 Ravens Gold Medal winning team. Back row, fourth from left, Jess Gibson, middle row, first from left, Taila Hurley, third from left, Haydn Luckin.



Coastal School inline team, with referee Alan Henderson at back.

butlers reef

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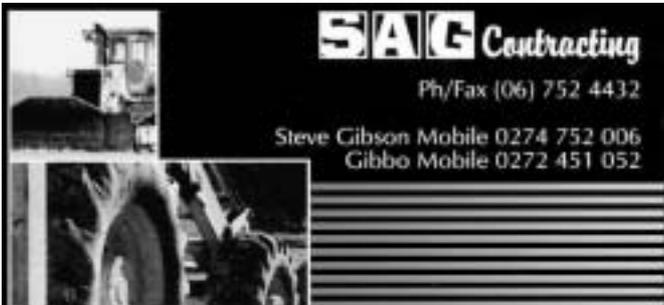
Callum Grayling, left and Liam Gibson, right.

Coastal School proves its prowess at bowls

Coastal School entered a number of teams in the annual intermediate bowls tournament held at Hempton Hall and this year the number four team dominated. It is a great day of fun and competition.



The Winning team, Coastal Number 4 Team L-R Bryce Goble aged 12, Rodney Cruden-Powell aged 11, Joseph Brophy aged 12, Billie Cameron aged 12.



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Feeling clucky

I always thought of bantams as broody things. We have one on our property and she always likes to hide and continually sit on her eggs, waiting for them to hatch. This is what they do, Nathan Moffitt informs me.

Nathan, a 16 year old student at Coastal Taranaki School, has had Pekin bantams since he was eight years old. His Gran gave him two Pekin bantams for his 8th birthday and now he breeds about 20 of the two legged feathered friends. The bantams are all the same breed but are seven different colours. Each colour has its own cage and a number of hens with a rooster. They are fed pellets, household scraps and fresh water, and are allowed out of their cages to forage for bugs and grass.

Once the hens have been laying for a couple of weeks they start to continually sit in the nesting boxes because they are wanting to incubate eggs, meaning they are "clucky". Nathan then chooses whether to put them in a separate cage with a nest of eggs or put them in a cage without a nesting box, where they will eventually get over being clucky and start laying again. The hen sits on the eggs until they have hatched, which takes 21 days. She and her chicks are then put in a secure cage where they will be safe from cats, hedgehogs, stoats and other wandering pests.

Last year Nathan got an incubator so he can hatch anything in it, including wild duck and turkey eggs found on the farm. When the eggs hatch he takes them out of the incubator and puts them in a box in the garage with a heat lamp to keep them warm. When the chicks have grown feathers he can put them outside, as the feathers act as insulation and they don't need the heat lamp any longer.

"There is not really that much involved," Nathan said. He feeds them once a day and gives them fresh water. At the moment they are "off the lay" as it is too cold. They stopped laying in March/April and will start up again around September.

I asked Nathan if he sells the bantams. "Yes, I sell them once they are fully feathered and when I can tell what sex they are, or when they are almost fully grown. Trade Me has been a good avenue for selling, I can get anything from \$10 up to \$85 for a hen." The downside is that most of the time buyers aren't local and I have to arrange for them to go on the pet courier which can take them anywhere in New Zealand.

Nathan is open to selling them locally and people can contact him on 752 8164.

By Milly Carr





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Okato Playgroup

We are a relaxed group providing a supportive and social environment for those involved in caring for little ones. Opportunities for playing, learning and interacting are offered for ages newborn to 5 years. We get together on Wednesday mornings from 10am - 12pm at the St Lukes Hall (corner Carthew & Gosslings Sts).

We would love to meet you and your little one/s, so come along and join us for a cuppa and a chat. Cost is \$1 per child or \$2 per family. If you have any questions or would like more information please contact Vanessa on 752-4431 or Danelle on 752-4916.

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OAKURA CLUBS & GROUPS

Bellydance

Every Thursday at Oakura Boardriders Club. 7.15 to 8.30pm.
Contact Rosalina at 027 739 1380.

Country and Western Club

Every 1st and 3rd Friday from 8.00pm. Contact Betty West,
89 Wairau Rd. Ph 752 7816.

Hurford - Omata - Oakura Rural Women

Meet 2nd Wednesday each month at 1.00pm. New members
welcome. Contact Jean Kurth 751 2274.

Indoor Bowls

Mondays 7.30pm at Oakura Hall.
Ring Mike Vickers 752 7881.

JKA Karate

Tuesdays at Oakura Hall 5.30-6.30pm.
Thursdays at Oakura Hall 6.00-7.00pm.
Contact Jim Hoskin 752 7337.

Mini Groovers

Tuesday mornings 10.00am, Oakura Hall.
Gold coin donation.

Oakura Art Group

Tuesdays 9.45am to 12 noon, February to late November at St
James Church Hall.
Contact Pat Smith on 752 7515.

Oakura Pool Club

Meets every Wednesday evening 7pm @ Butlers Reef over
winter. Ph Stu 752 7407.

Okato Squash Club

Monday Club Night.

Omata Playgroup

Every 2nd Thursday, 9.00am at the Omata Community Hall.
Ring 751 2308 for next session date. All parents and pre-
schoolers welcome.

Playcentre

Playcentre, Donnelly Street.
Monday and Wednesday, 9.00 to noon.

Plunket Coffee mornings

Wednesday, 9.15am to 11.00am (please arrive before
10.00am). During the winter months, held at attendees homes
- please contact Bob Fleming 752 7048 or Fe Burkett, 752
1132, or Claire Florence, 752 7889 to find out where.

Senior Citizens

Meet Tuesdays in St James Church lounge for cards and
bowls. All welcome. Phone 753 5705 for enquiries.

St James Church, Oakura

Morning worship 10.00am, 2nd and 4th Sundays of the
month.

St John's, Omata

Morning worship 10.00am, 2nd Sunday of the month.

Tai Chi ACC Classes

St James Church, Weds 10.30am. Ph Joanna Smith Holley
752 1016 for details.

Volkswagen Club

Events range from car rallies,
the YMCA climbing wall,
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Contact Brian Goodhue,
the EI Presidente 752 1290,
email podsnaill@xnet.co.nz

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