

Okato Fire Brigade

A history - from old to new

A lot of you may be aware of the happenings at the local fire station – big changes have occurred over the past few weeks.

It has been a very hectic time for our Chief and Deputy Chief, who have both been involved in the decision making around and construction of the new fire station, and we are thankful to all those people involved in this process.

The big shift occurred on 26 May and we gave the first chief of the Okato Fire Brigade, Mr Ray Rook, the honour of being the passenger alongside the

present Chief Fire Officer, Mr Barry Harvey, in driving the appliance out of the existing station and into the new. "A great feeling," said Ray.

For some people 31 May was a day of reflection and for others it was simply a mission to demolish the old fire station to prepare for the new training/car park area alongside our newly built station next door. The day of the demolition was

huge. The night before involved the removal of the roof iron and on Saturday the work commenced at approximately 8 am. It was all hands on deck and tools to the task. There were several tractors loading and unloading rubble, many chainsaws and sledge hammers, and with the help of most of the members plus others, we achieved the desired outcome and little evidence remained of the old appliance bay, office and store room.

Of the old building only the social room was left standing, which was sold to Sandy Southcombe, house removals and removed on Tuesday 10 June.

Brian Hill and his builders are working on the car park/training area as this goes to print, putting in retaining walls and preparing the site.

The station has been based next door to Hempton Hall in Carthew Street, Okato

(Continued on page 3)



Original Fire Chief, Ray Rook takes a nostalgic ride into the new building with current Chief Fire Officer, Barry Harvey.



a peek inside

Lions' Den	2
TOM Sports	4
A helping hand from Kip	5
Coastal Taranaki School	6, 7
Floods, mud and debris	8
Okato Playgroup	9
Classifieds	9
TOM Okato babies	10

editorial FROM THE TOM ZONE

Our two writers, Milly and Kerry, have been busy since your first issue was published in October last year. They have been entertained by the wonderful stories you have shared with them and their notebooks are overflowing with story ideas. *Okato TOM* is a pleasure to read as it reflects precisely the community you are.

It is interesting to watch a small village change from being a place that was cheap to buy a house in – compared to Oakura, which was always the measuring stick – to a place where people want to live, and choose to live, because of the lifestyle. Whenever there is a considerable change to a community it is often easy to overlook its past and its history, the people who made it what it was and still is. So . . .

When we are treated to a story about Ray Rook and his involvement in Okato it helps create a picture of “the people in your community”. People like Ray did the things they did and continue to do today, not for the recognition or the kudos, but because they are thoroughly good people. Keep it up, Okato.

Tracey Lusk

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Copy and ads 25 July, delivery 13 August.**



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

Okato Lions Club

Hello readers.

It is time again for the Lions' contribution to *TOM*.

As I write this there is a good rain falling outside, so our winter green feed growth should benefit over the next months.

It has been decided that our changeover night (when officers change for the next twelve months) will be at our usual venue of Hempton Hall on the first Wednesday in July.

The Lions phone book is nearly ready to go to print so you should receive it within a few weeks. The Lions logo is also ready to be stencilled onto the bus shelters throughout the community. One of our projects is maintaining and placing bus shelters around the area so if you know of a need for one (e.g., at a pick-up point for a group of children) or one not being used, please let a Lions member know.

Donations we have made over the past months have included the Okato Tennis Club and the Okato Playcentre.

As usual, we would like new members on board. Lions are a great organisation for friendship, fellowship and helping others. All funds raised are donated back into our community. So if you know of anyone who would like to join us, please let a Lions member know.

Until next month.

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(Continued from page 1)

Okato Fire Brigade

A history - from old to new

since 1956 and was built by a local builder. The first "fire party" was formed by a group of local enthusiasts with the aim of helping to protect people within the community.

This group was first established in 1952 and trainings were held on alternate Sundays and Mondays at various properties, sourcing their water supplies. The Taranaki County Council supplied a trailer pump, an ex-British war asset, and this was housed in the garage of Coastal Motors and towed by the break-down truck.

This very loose arrangement lasted for two years until the Taranaki County Council suggested a formal unit of two officers and 10 firemen be formed. Ray Rook was elected Chief Fire Officer and Arthur Aldridge was Deputy. No more members were allowed at this point.

When the Brigade did reach a total of 16 members, the Fire Service Commission wanted to get rid of the four Fire Police they had in the Service. Ray fought to keep the Fire Police. He gathered community support and stood his ground. "These guys were a very important part of the service and were regarded very highly".

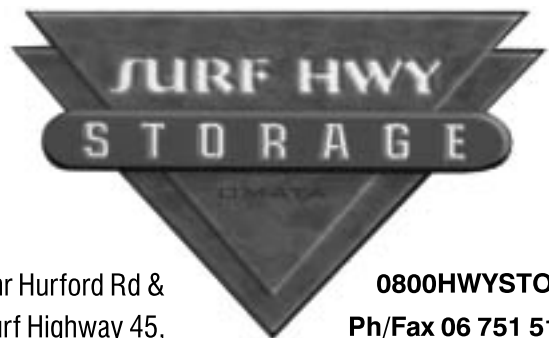
In those days they didn't have the Level Two clothing that we wear to call-outs today – they made do with their own overalls and gumboots. They had wartime ex-army steel helmets and later came the black woollen bunker coats.

End of part one. Part two next issue.



Barry, Ray, Moe Kelly and Brian Hill.

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TOM SPORTS

TOM Sports Profile

Many of Okato's sons are involved in the increasingly popular sport of inline hockey. Families such as the Luckins, the Hurleys and the Gibsons all travel regularly into the East End Skating Rink to attend the local inline hockey club, The Ravens.

The 2008 season is halfway through and TOM profiles two players from The Ravens' Under-12 No. 2 team – Callum Hurley (captain) and Cody Luckin.

When did you start playing inline hockey?

Cody: In 2004 I started playing in the school league, which is held in Terms 1 and 4, but I started playing for The Ravens Under-12/2s this year.

Callum: I first started playing when I started at Coastal School three seasons ago.

Why did you want to play inline hockey?

Cody: Because it keeps you fit and you meet new people.

Callum: I wanted to play because I enjoy skating and all my friends were getting into inline.

What do you enjoy about inline hockey?

Cody: Getting to travel to other cities. The Ravens travel to Hamilton to play the Devils and to Waihi to play the Miners.

Callum: I enjoy travelling around the North Island and playing against other regions.

Do you play other sports?

Cody: I play cricket and rugby sometimes.

Callum: I play soccer, squash, cricket, tennis and I swim.

Do you have other hobbies or interests?

Cody: I like sports and being outdoors riding motorbikes. I like watching rugby.

Callum: I like making movies, photography, wood work, fishing and video games.

What does being captain of the Under-12/2s involve, Callum?

Callum: I have to give encouragement to my team mates and always stay positive.

The Under-12/2s have played The Ravens' No. 1 team three times and lost, the Devils twice and won, and the Miners twice and lost one and drew one. The team is coached by Greg Gray.



Cody Luckin playing in Hamilton.



Callum Hurley in Hamilton.

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Kip McGrath

The New Plymouth Kip McGrath Education Centre was established by Judy Clark in 2004 to provide tuition to children in Taranaki, from Mokau in the North to Stratford in the South and Opunake on the coast. Satellite centres now exist in Stratford, Inglewood and Okato.

With over 25 years' experience in primary and secondary education (all on the Coast, at Okato College and Opunake High School), Judy's firsthand experience in education assists greatly in identifying the specific learning needs of every individual child who attends the New Plymouth Centre in the Kings building, Devon St. Judy was awarded a Woolf Fisher Award for Services to Education. Kip McGrath now also has a centre in Okato based at Coastal Taranaki School. The centre operates on a Wednesday afternoon with sessions available at 3.30 pm and 5 pm. These times are very flexible.

Kip McGrath Education Centre's tutors are an exceptional team who provide caring support to all students – from those needing extra maths or English tutoring to students wanting to push themselves a little harder with our extension programmes. All tutors are fully qualified. The Okato Centre has two exceptionally talented coastal identities: Mrs Yvonne Burr – ex-Okato Primary School, and Mrs Rebecca Muggeridge (nee Burmeister) – ex-head girl of Okato College and teacher from Ngaere Primary School. Our Education Centre delivers the following individual programmes for remedial and/or extension courses:

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CTS Sustainability – what is the school up to?

In Room 3 (my class) we are planting chives, parsley, sweet basil and mystery seeds. We have noticed that the chives are growing the fastest. We keep Glad Wrap over the plants that have not yet sprouted to keep them warm. Our plants were sown in seed-raising mix and we watered them. On 5 June, "World Environment Day", we planted our plants.

Mrs Leathley – They are looking at the three R's, what they stand for and things we can recycle.

Mrs Normanton – Their subject in their book is Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. They went for a trip to the big landfill. They are recycling their rubbish by putting their lunch rubbish in separate bins for paper, plastics and food scraps.

Mrs H. – They are looking at Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. They are learning to use the food bins and they are turning off their lights and opening their blinds to save electricity.

Mrs Morby – They have made different rubbish bins for paper, plastics and food scraps. The little children in her class have made artwork using old magazines and newspapers. Soon they will be making musical instruments with recycled stuff. They talk and read about the three R's.

Miss Zimmerman – In the classroom they recycle by using bins for different things. They have used plastic bottles, cardboard boxes, etc to make artwork and they are looking at how they can reduce the amount of plastic in their lunches at school and at home.

Ms Thomas – She is getting children to reuse their drink bottles and have less packaging in their lunchboxes and trying to make them more aware of the rubbish.

By Shearyn Adlam – Year 7 Reporter

Tree Planting

On Friday 6 June the junior and intermediate students planted nine endangered trees. The trees were planted by nine special students.

The endangered trees – scandia rosifolia and corokia cotoneaster – were grown from seeds that DOC rescued from a rocky point near Okato and from Paritutu Rock. The 'scandia' was the last plant left at Okato.

Children from Moturoa School germinated the seeds and gave them to us to plant. All the plants that were planted are very rare, one that only grew in Okato was grown from a seed of the very last plant in the world and now it is ours to look after.

The students planted the trees with Mr Des Corbett, using the special Corbett Award Spade. The Spade was first used to plant a tree over in London with the Queen at her Coronation. Mr Corbett, Senior was the Minister of Parks and Reserves in

Cambodia

Ashley Hetherington (a Year 13 student from Coastal Taranaki School) flew to Asia for a missionary trip to represent the World Vision Charity in Bangkok and Cambodia.

She flew there with 12 other students who were from Nayland College in Nelson. Ashley says they're all "cool" and she enjoyed her trip with them.

She went to Bangkok for the first two days and all she could smell was heat and the food there. She then went to Cambodia. One of the things Ashley enjoyed was walking through two kilometres of rice paddies in the boiling hot sun. Once they had got through them they came to a small village. An old man was in hospital. His wife and two children were living in a small hut about the size of the Okato Public Toilets, but a lot shorter – you couldn't even stand up in it. The exciting thing was, they pretty much demolished the whole house and gathered the useable materials. They built a new house for the family using the bamboo and other materials they could find. The new house was a lot sturdier and kept the rain out. The family was very grateful.

One of the only things that worried her was the scorpions. On their way around Cambodia they came across many ancient temples and they even went to the one that *Tomb Raider* was filmed in. Fortunately there were no mummies but there were monkeys that may have had rabies.

They also went to an orphanage that had many orphans who were saved from almost certain death on the streets of Cambodia. They each got an orphan from the orphanage to look after for the day. Ashley's orphan's name was Shrey Lot and they all went to a Water Park. Ashley generously bought a pair of shorts for Shrey Lot to swim in.

Ashley's experience in Cambodia has compelled her to become involved with this year's Forty Hour Famine and she has encouraged other students to do the same.

Ashley says she would like to go back to Cambodia once she is an early childhood teacher. Good luck, Ashley!

By Zjahmyn Baker – Year 8 Reporter



Siobhan Brophy and Mr Des Corbett start the business of tree planting.

England. The spade is used as a trophy at our school and is usually on a plaque. One student a year gets the trophy and plants a tree. The award is given for "caring and kindness".

By Jasmin Warren – Year 8 Reporter

CTS Sports News

Sport is going very well at Coastal Taranaki School. The students are enjoying their winter sports. Basketball has now started and the students are having a great time!

Netball coaching clinic

On Tuesday 27 May (for junior netball players) and Tuesday 3 June (for the senior players) an exciting netball coaching clinic was held at the school. Everyone had a great time and would like to thank Jodie Hikuroa for teaching them some new skills and drills.

Netball Tournament

The CTS Intermediate Netball Team participated in a netball tournament recently. They had a great time even though they lost all of their games. Good luck for your future tournaments and other games.

Taranaki Secondary School Sports Association (TSSSA)

Congratulations to the students who participated in the TSSSA Golf Tournament and the TSSSA Orienteering Competition. Hope the day was enjoyed.

Cross country

The recent CTS cross country race was a great day all around. The students had lots of fun and ran hard. Congratulations to the students who gave it their best.

Taranaki Cross Country

On 23 May Ethan Adams participated in the Taranaki Cross Country. He did very well and came in seventh – a fantastic achievement. He has also made it through to the nationals.

By Jasmin Warren – Year 8 Reporter

The hills are alive . . .

Bennett de Beer, a Year 9 student from Coastal Taranaki School, won a role in the recent performance of *The Sound of Music*.

He was chosen from around ninety people from his age group to play the eldest boy, Frederick Von Trapp, in the musical, which ran from 19-29 June.

Everything about it was an amazing experience and opportunity for Bennett. They'd been rehearsing since February, when Bennett got the part. He says it was so tiring and he got home at around 12 o'clock from each practice, every night. Bennett performed in eleven shows at the TSB Show Place. His favourite part in the play was singing on the bed.

All of the crew, cast and production staff were really helpful and great to work with. Bennett has wanted to be an actor when he grows up since he was about seven years old. He was inspired by the movie to audition for the production.

Bennett says he will audition for more plays if he can. He was really excited about getting the part.

Victoria Grayling – Year 8 Reporter



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The floods in all their fury

The end of April was a time that many won't forget in a hurry! I recall the intense rain pelting the tin roof at home as I eventually turned the light off from reading. "I bet the siren goes off tonight," I said to Richard.

Blow me down – the siren went off at 1.13 am (approx time!). "People stranded, flooding at an Okato residence", it read on my pager.

As we headed to our destination there was a sense of helplessness. What could a fire engine with fire fighters on board actually do in this instance?

We set about our job and thankfully Mother Nature was on our side. During the time we were in attendance the rain stopped and the river and water levels were subsiding rapidly,

"Phew!" was a nice way of putting how I felt at that point. Never mind how the poor people felt in their "moat", stranded at their property with swollen rivers rising closer and closer to their door.

The devastation of the early morning floods was clearly evident the next day as I took a walk down Kaihihi Road. Was this what we'd been dealing with in the bleak, dark hours of the morning?

The Stony River had swept through the paddocks on and near Kaihihi Road and the road itself had become a river. It was unbelievable to see the tar seal buckled and the masses of debris strewn on the roadside, fences flattened, mud and silt lying like silk rugs along the road and in the paddocks. When I saw the destruction that had occurred in such a short time I realised that we really had been very lucky that the rain had stopped when it did or we could have been dealing with more tragedies.

I spoke with Kevin and Karen Smith who own the Allied Petrol company in Okato. They were very unfortunate to bear the brunt of the flood. I asked them a few questions and this is what they had to say:

"We weren't aware of the floods until we arrived at work. We saw logs down the road and had wondered what had happened.

When we went into the Garage there was about 12 inches of gravel in the forecourt, water and mud through the entire garage, plus the pit was completely full.

The business was closed for three days to enable us to clean up the mess. All the electrical equipment had to be tested as well as the fuel pumps before they could be used.

Has this happened before? No, and it is not something we wish to happen again! If the river had not burst its banks, I think we and the residents of Kaihihi Road could have been faced with a real disaster if the Stony Bridge had gone. It is such a shock to be faced with this sort of thing when you arrive at your workplace. You don't really know where to start.

You hear about it happening to other people but never think it is going to happen to you."

The Stony walkway is a mass of trees and debris in many parts of the farmland. The water levels rose approximately 4 - 5 metres in places, evident by the debris lying in huge piles against the barbary hedges and surrounding farmland.

The walkway through the bush has been eroded in many places and care should be taken when venturing through there if you are unfamiliar with the track. The small swing bridge over the Kaihihi River has had an abutment damaged.

The track on the Stony River side has changed rather dramatically and a walkway which was dirt clad is now like a sandy beach track.

It is a time to reflect on how lucky most of us actually were that night and to spare a thought for those who were not so lucky, with losing bridges, stock and other possessions.

We cannot control Mother Nature and we must not forget that.

By Milly Carr



Devastation at the Stony River.



Brittany and Blake Carr on the Stony Walkway.



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Okato Playgroup

On one evening each week, my young sons went to Boys' Brigade in St Lukes Hall. A few years later, when my daughter was little, we used the facilities for Te Kohanga Reo sessions. I have often wondered what goes on in St Lukes Hall these days. Recently I found out.

Each Wednesday morning, the hall is opened, children and their parents or caregivers materialise, toys are hauled from the storeroom and Okato Playgroup gets underway. It becomes a centre for children's play and provides an opportunity for parents to meet and support each other, swap parenting ideas, relax over a cup of coffee and chat.

I am met by Vanessa Danger, the group's coordinator. She has been taking her and Sohnke's daughter, Isabella, since early 2005. Just three months old then, Isabella is three and a half now and has been joined by Cinnamon, who turned two last week. When Vanessa and Isabella first started, eight or ten children would arrive each week; now there are over forty on the role and between sixteen and twenty-six children turn up for each session. They live in and around Okato mostly, but a few come from Oakura and a couple even come from Fitzroy. Playgroup, Vanessa tells me, provides an alternative to Playcentre for children of preschool age. Here, there is no commitment to attend – people come when they can or when they feel the need. There are no set duties, everyone pitches in to help set up, prepare morning tea and clean up afterwards. But while it is relaxed, it isn't devoid of structure.

Every session is planned around a theme and afterwards, written up. There have been "Bees, bugs and butterflies" and more recently, "Celebrating Summer".

"Meredith is an early childhood teacher," Vanessa tells me, "and she does a lot of the planning for these." None of the children are obliged to join in but many do and afterwards they are encouraged to continue related activities. Even during free play, parents and caregivers get involved and guide the children.

Sometimes there are outings. Last week twenty-three children visited Jack and Jill's (an activity centre for zero to seven year olds in New Plymouth) and once a year there is the "Teddy Bears' Picnic". There are hot cross buns for Easter and a Christmas party every year with festive food, presents and a Santa visit.

Okato Playgroup meets in St Lukes Hall every Wednesday from 10 am to midday. If you would like to know more about it, contact one of its committee members:

Vanessa Danger, Co-coordinator – 752 4431

By Kerry Lilley



Vanessa Danger with Isabella (left) and Cinnamon.

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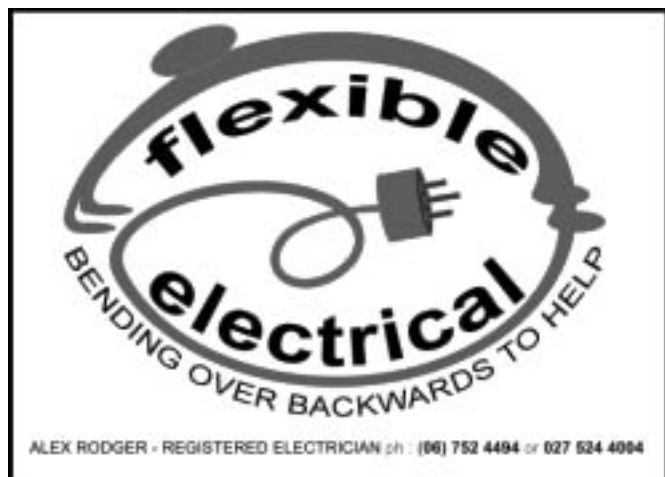
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Anne Adkins and Chris Atherton came to Okato from the Kapiti Coast for the surf and, according to Chris, 'to get out of the rat race.' **Olivia Jayne** joined them at Taranaki Base Hospital on 23 September 2007. While Chris goes to work as a sales rep for Janko and Anne works at the TSB Bank as a customer service rep, Olivia enjoys time out at Wrinkles, the daycare centre.

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