

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 125 – March 29, 2024

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

WBHS young gun scores major cricket prize... p3

WWII fighter pilot reaches 100... p4-5

Arts-centre man wins award for acting sideline... p22-23

Coastal track needs saviour with deep pockets

WANTED: A white knight to charge in and save the day by buying the heritage-listed property where a fence has severed the Takapuna-to-Milford coastal track.

But a fairytale ending to this drawn-out saga seems less likely than ever, with the Black Rock property now for sale by tender.

This follows a unanimous decision by the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board last week that it could not afford to buy the 9 Kitchener Rd property with limited board funds.

Chair Toni van Tonder said the board – delegated by Auckland Council to try to come up with a local solution – had explored

all suggestions during a meeting from which the press and public were excluded due to commercially sensitive information being discussed.

Van Tonder told the Observer there was a “wide gap” between a recent valuation

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Och aye! Takapuna enjoys skirl of the pipes



Plenty of puff... the Auckland and District Pipe Band make their way down Lake Rd during the New Zealand Pipe Band Championships on 16 March. More photos, pages 14-15



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Local Board can't afford property where track cut

From page 1

obtained by the board and the expectations of beneficiaries, working from a council valuation of \$6.81 million.

With insufficient funds of its own and the council having no appetite to deal with the matter, she said the board made the difficult decision to say no to a conditional deal offered by the property owners.

The owners were no longer interested in giving an easement across the property, which had been offered in exchange for a lifting of the property's heritage listing. They wanted to sell.

Van Tonder said the board was disappointed, as the community would be, especially the 7500 people who signed a Takapuna Residents Association (TRA) petition that last year called on council to safeguard the track.

TRA chair Steven Salt said: "The outcome is disappointing but not surprising considering the constraints the board was placed under in terms of budget. It was a sorry situation that could have been avoided if the council had acted earlier." The Milford Residents Association (MRA) is equally dismayed. Co-chair Debbie Dunsford told the board ahead of its meeting that, "A solution has to be found. We won't accept [the track] being closed."

Dunsford remained hopeful this week that the track might be saved, especially if the property didn't sell due to its "nonsense" heritage listing.

Precision real estate agent Andrew Dorreen, who is marketing the property, is another who believes ideally a way could be found to meet everyone's expectations, with council a logical buyer. But he is open to all offers and says the beneficiaries want to move on.

His sales material states: "There is an opportunity for a custodian or perhaps a group of custodians to get together and secure a piece of New Zealand history. There could be a motivation... to restore public access to the North Shore walkway by donating the land back for public use."

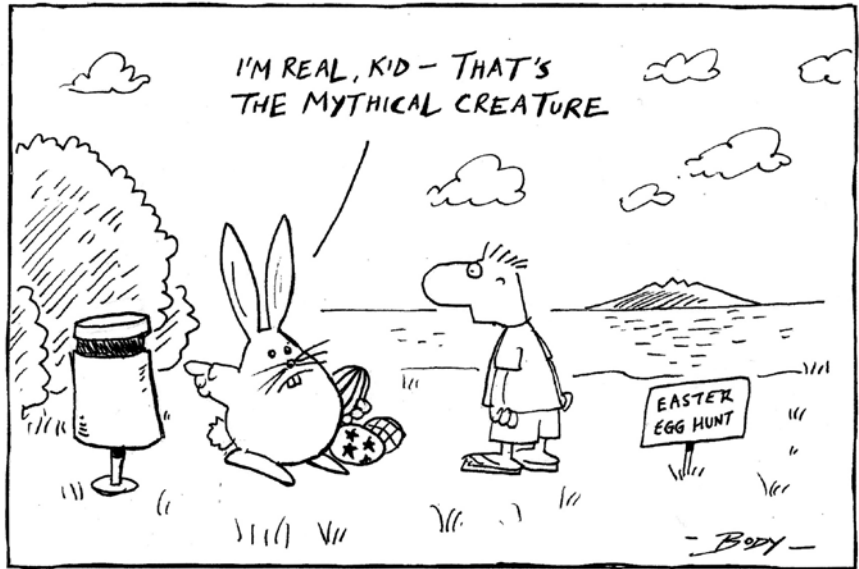
Van Tonder said the board hadn't "closed the door" on trying to strike an access arrangement with a new buyer. But \$3.1m in hand from the sale of the former Takapuna library sale could not go towards that, due to the terms of an original endowment.

Some in the community have suggested a Givealittle campaign to raise money to support a purchase.

Van Tonder said a targeted rate or selling assets to raise money for a purchase were not viable options in this case because of the time-frame and consultations processes needed.

But having staff identify the assets in the board's area had been a useful exercise, finding that very few of the 383 properties might be suitable for disposal.

- Janetta Mackay, editor



Upgraded recycling bins quickly dumped in cost-cutting drive

The removal of recycling bins installed in the recent Hurstmere Rd street upgrade has dismayed the Takapuna Beach Business Association.

TBBA chief executive Terence Harpur said the cost-saving move by Auckland Council seemed in this case a waste of money.

The bins had been installed near the ASB. But Harpur said he had so far fielded only one complaint from a business owner about bin reductions across the town centre.

A cafe on Hurstmere Rd told him that since a bin near it was taken out this month it had been left to pick up more takeaway cups discarded by passers-by.

City-wide, 30 per cent of bins are being removed, with hoped-for savings of \$9.5 million over eight years. The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area is losing a total of 148 bins, leaving 373.

Harpur said Takapuna was fortunate that due to its size it was considered by council to be a Category A area, meaning a street sweeper went through daily.

He was pleased that "big belly bins" near the beach reserve had been kept in place. During his regular walks, Harpur said he was yet to see any increase in litter along Takapuna Beach.

"We are just going to monitor it and see where issues crop up and inform council."

Council has told the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board it will consider reinstating bins in areas where problems occur, but that this would involve a trade-off of removing a bin from a less-busy location.

• Tell us if you see overflowing bins
The Observer is keen to hear about the impact of the bin reduction policy. If areas have obvious ongoing litter issues, let us know and we will follow up with council.

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Newcomer wins big after instant cricketing impact

A Westlake Boys High School cricketer has won New Zealand's Young Player of the Year award, less than 12 months after arriving here.

Jordan van Zyl was presented with the award on 13 March, rubbing shoulders with Black Caps Tim Southee, Kane Williamson, Neil Wagner and Finn Allen at the New Zealand Cricket Awards in Christchurch.

"It was a good experience just talking to them," he told the Observer.

The 17-year-old immigrated with his family to New Zealand from South Africa seven months ago, initially living in Tauranga for three weeks before moving to Auckland.

He started school at Westlake, joining the first XI cricket side and impressing at last December's Gillette Cup, the national secondary schools one-day cricket competition.

Jordan won the tournament MVP and finished as the leading run-scorer, with 247 runs, three half-centuries, and an average of 49, as Westlake finished runners-up.

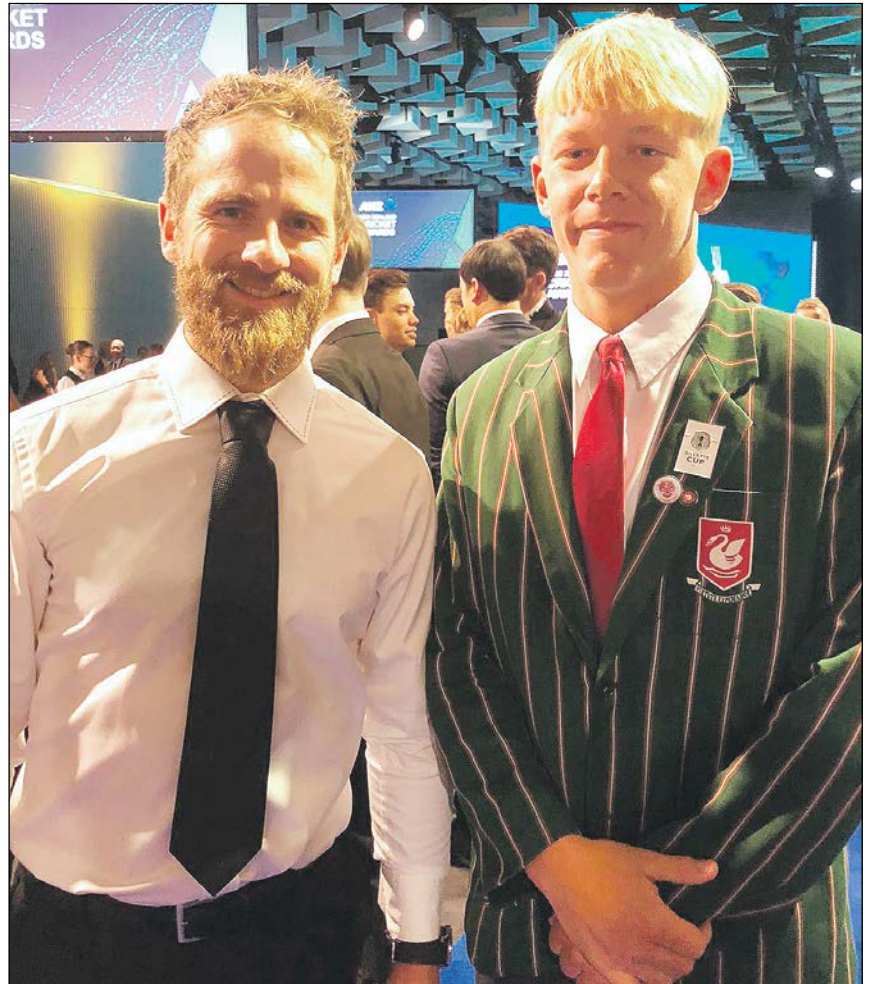
The year-12 student said it felt great to win the award, especially considering those who have previously lifted the trophy.

"Looking back at all of the names on the trophy is quite amazing: Kane Williamson, Tim Southee, Rachin Ravindra..."

"I felt pretty proud of myself, but I also need to keep on working because if I keep on working great things will happen."

Westlake's first XI cricket side have gone into the winter break on top of the Auckland secondary school premier limited-over competition table, having had eight wins and one loss.

Jordan said if the side can pick up where they left off when the season resumes in term four, they can "definitely" make it to another Gillette Cup.



Top performers... Star Black Caps batsman and former Young Player award winner Kane Williamson (left) with this year's winner Jordan van Zyl

The all-rounder said he aims to get a contract with the Auckland Aces a year or two after he leaves school and use that to prove

himself and be selected for the Black Caps. He also has aspirations to play T20 cricket in the Indian Premier League one day.

War to Shore: Former WWII fighter pilot

A Milford resident who just turned 100 can look back on an incident-packed early life that included surviving bombings during the London Blitz, and taking on the Japanese as a fighter pilot towards the end of World War II.

Happily, David Barnston can also reflect on a long career as a civilian pilot, a happy marriage and raising a family on the North Shore after his arrival in New Zealand in 1948.

Barnston's early years were spent in north-west London but as a teenager when the war started in 1939 he was evacuated to Cornwall and billeted with locals.

When his older brother Jack was killed in battle, Barnston was brought back to London by his parents, under the illusion he would be safe as the war hadn't yet hit British soil.

"In the beginning of 1940 nothing was happening, so they thought we'd be together in London."

But soon after his return to London, the Blitz started. A bomb struck near the family flat in Marylebone, leaving it badly damaged and killing 30 people.

After the repaired flat was bombed a second time, the family relocated to St Johns Wood, where the Royal Air Force happened to be running a recruiting centre at Lord's Cricket Ground.

Already a fan of planes from watching aircraft displays at Hendon Aerodrome as a child, Barnston signed up and became a RAF trainee at 17.

In 1942, he was sent to complete his pilot's training in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), later being deployed to Bangalore, India, to join 123 Squadron, which was converting from Hurricanes to American-made P47 Thunderbolts.

The squadron was deployed to Nazir, Northern Burma (now Myanmar), to provide air support to the British ground forces fighting the Japanese. "We didn't have the opposition they had in Europe, but we were well aware that with a single-engined aircraft if you did have an engine failure you'd end up with the Japanese – and they didn't treat pilots well."

He recalls the successful campaign when his squadron bombed the walls of Fort Dufferin in the city of Mandalay, creating a breach that allowed the British Army to take the fort and help drive the Japanese forces out of Burma. "I felt that was a more successful outcome than some of our other operations."

A month after the war ended, the squadron was sent to Java in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) during the Indonesian War of Independence. Its aircraft protected safe roads, which were being used by Dutch settlers fleeing the country, from rebel attacks.

After three and a half years overseas, 22-year-old Barnston was transferred back to the United Kingdom, where he ran mock air



Drawn to the Shore... David Barnston at home in Milford, where he has lived since 1962

attacks in Wales and northern England, training soldiers for combat.

He soon met Dorothy Holman, who would later become his wife. The pair became unofficially engaged in the UK but held off marrying, as Dorothy and her family were soon to leave for New Zealand.

As luck would have it, Barnston would soon have the perfect opportunity to join her there. He had begun civilian life working for the Powers-Samas accounting machine company in the UK and, when a representative of the firm in New Zealand was taken ill, was asked to set up a branch in Auckland. "[The overseas manager] said our man in Wellington has just been rushed to hospital with a goitre, how soon could you go to New Zealand? I said 'tomorrow'."

Barnston arrived in New Zealand about a year after Dorothy and the pair married in 1950 – a partnership that lasted until her death in 2018.



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War service... Barnston in his RAF uniform and talking to a fellow fighter pilot

The year they married, Barnston joined the RNZAF Territorial Air Force, and the next year was taken on by NAC (the National Airways Corporation) as a co-pilot, then pilot.

The couple built a house on Wairau Rd in 1950, with the help of Dorothy's father, a retired builder, and a book called *The Australian Carpenter*. "I sort of had the book in one hand and the hammer in the other," says Barnston.

He eventually added four flats to the property, which stood until three years ago.

In 1962, the family moved to a new subdivision in Milford, beside Lake Pupuke. "I could see that it would be a great place to bring up kids. It turned out to be as good a place as any."

The family later moved closer to the sea in Milford, to a home he remains in today.

In 1964, Barnston helped establish the North Shore Squash Club in Shea Tee after receiving a challenge to a match from pilots living in Henderson, where he and his team got "cleaned up".

Barnston's flying career continued until 1979, including a year flying internationally to the Pacific Islands after NAC merged with Air New Zealand in 1978. He continued as a flight-safety adviser until his retirement in 1982.

In retirement, he was active in the Lions Club and travelled back to Europe regularly with Dorothy.

Barnston said he often gets asked the secret to a long life and his response is always "clean living, pure thoughts and telling lies".

He turned 100 on 24 March, celebrating with a party attended by his three sons, nine grandchildren, other family and friends.



On the wing... Barnston climbing aboard an RAF P47 Thunderbolt

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Inside out... The view from the front room of the Firth house (left) and the modest home's exterior (right).
Below: Andrew Dorreen, who is selling the property.

Firth house agent a local who treasures track too

Real-estate agent Andrew Dorreen is used to selling prime coastal properties, but few are likely to attract as much community interest as the latest landmark he is marketing.

Dorreen last week put the Firth estate property at 9 Kitchener Rd up for tender on behalf of its beneficiaries.

The property is where a fence installed late last year has severed the popular Takapuna-to-Milford coastal track.

Selling by tender is a classic strategy to tease out interest for unusual properties which are hard to value.

“Don’t ask if there’s a target,” Dorreen, a Precision Real Estate associate, tells the Observer. “We’re trying to get the best money out of the market.”

The value is in the site of 1072sqm, with its wide sea frontage, he says, adding the home’s Heritage A listing lessens that.

Sales material describes the property as “iconic”.

It is on the market for the first time since the 1920s. “The family bought it as a bach. They loved it so much, based on its rustic nature and its surroundings, they decided to live there,” he says.

Prospective buyers will be advised of its heritage status, which prevents removal or demolition of the cottage.

But Dorreen says a new owner could seek to have the heritage listing lifted. “The site is good enough and unique enough for a buyer to come in and purchase the property, potentially at a discount, to do that.”

It has an Auckland Council CV of \$6.81 million, with the cottage on it valued at just \$50,000.

“The market I operate in doesn’t generally use CV as a guide,” says Dorreen, who has a sales-price average of \$5 million, making him one of the country’s top agents.

He focuses on the Takapuna-Milford Golden Mile, but sells coastal properties between Cheltenham Beach and Mairangi Bay.



Comparable properties in this top tier form a basis for offers, he says, but the Firth property has a history all of its own.

“It is a challenging property to market for the reasons that are pretty obvious,” he says. “We are looking for a buyer to come in and secure it for what it is.”

“They may want to renovate the cottage back to its former glory.” There might be an opportunity for a buyer to later come to their own arrangement with council, he hopes.

“The opportunity I see for a buyer or any group of buyers is to secure the property and restore access to the walkway.”

His personal view, as a resident of Milford who works in Takapuna, is not dissimilar to that of many other locals: Auckland Council would be the logical buyer. “It seems crazy to me to not walk along the waterfront.”

Dorreen says whoever buys the property might be minded to allow coastal access across it, as the late Paul Firth did for many years, but they would be entirely within their rights to keep up the fences.

“A deal hasn’t been able to be made for

many years and there has been huge dialogue between Paul Firth, the estate and the council. I’m still hopeful that through the tender process the council may reconsider their position. For the public to walk across that property, it’s very invasive, and it is a real candidate for council to take over,” he says.

Dorreen used to regularly cross the Firth property from his Audrey Rd home to swim at Thorne Bay, but with the track fenced off by the frustrated beneficiaries last August, he now takes his dips at Milford Beach.

“It’s a local wonder to be able to walk along there,” he says.

He likens the coastal path to great walks such as Sydney’s Bondi to Bronte coastal track, which is loved by residents and tourists. He also points to parts of Great Barrier and Waiheke islands and the Marlborough Sounds, where public coastal access has been maintained.

Ratepayers have been disadvantaged by council not repairing the bridge that washed out in 2012, he says, with council relying on Firth’s willingness to have people walk across his front garden.

Firth, who died in 2021, wanted the track kept open, but he had for years sought to sell the property, with conditions, to council. The beneficiaries tried to do this too.

Dorreen says the estate’s beneficiaries tried to expedite Firth’s wishes, but could not strike a deal.

They were now keen to make a “clean break” and he wants to assist them to get a resolution.

“It’s their property and they are entitled to sell,” he says. They hope for an unconditional sale.

The closed-tender process will end after eight weeks on 24 May, unless sold prior. The longer-than-usual tender period recognised there was a lot for buyers to delve into when considering a purchase, Dorreen says.

• Letter, page 20

Write to the Rangitoto Observer

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New Italian dining for the North Shore at San Marco Bar and Trattoria

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Sizzling good time at Castor Bay



Dodgy weather last weekend meant Castor Bay Ratepayers and Residents Association chair Hamish Anderson held off buying supplies for the group's annual neighbourhood barbecue until Sunday morning.

But by afternoon he was able to relax in the sun with the nearly 70 other locals enjoying sausages and socialising on the beach reserve. Numbers at the community-building event were a little down on

previous years due to the earlier erratic weather. Those who gathered enjoyed music from the North Shore Brass Academy Band and a contemporary guitar and vocal duo of Kevin Millar from Milford and Serene Boulton from Campbells Bay.

Environmental group Pupuke Bird Song Project was on hand to offer advice and trees to take home and the residents association signed up some new members.

Family outings... The Watkins clan (from left, above) Ryan (with Poppy the French bulldog) Jessica, Jacob (12) and Grace (9), at their first neighbourhood barbecue in Castor Bay. Sheila Nicholson (right) from Belmont was back again to see her daughter and grandson, Christine and David Huckle from Milford, playing for North Shore Brass.

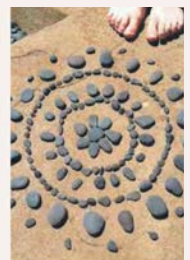


Expert guidance... Yuri Handa is conducted by star brass player Liam Wright during her solo on the euphonium. She lives in Takapuna and is a newcomer to the North Shore Brass Academy Band. Liam is a national title winner, who plays in the senior band.

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Authors find success with era-hopping novel plots

Authors Olivia Spooner and Sheryl Beaumont are enjoying parallel success with best-selling novels that are both set in wartime and more recent eras.

Both works were in the Booksellers Aotearoa New Zealand Top 10 at the same time last month.

Spooner, owner of the Booklover store in Milford, wrote *The Girl from London* which has been on the list since it launched in November. It is still selling strongly. Beaumont's *The War Photographers* joined the list soon after publication last month, but with a small print run it dropped out, pending a reprint.

The women, who know each other slightly through having had children at Takapuna Grammar School at the same time, were happy to get together for an Observer photograph. Both live in Devonport.

Beaumont, who is an accountant, said she attended Spooner's book launch and was struck by the similarities of using World War II as a backdrop and placing descendants of key characters in later eras, though their novels were stylistically quite different. "Mine is heavier on crime."

Spooner, a former pharmacist, who turned her love of books and writing into a new career path, said her take on the popular historical-fiction genre had a New Zealand focus.

The Girl from London tells the story of a young teacher who accompanies children from war-torn England on a perilous journey south, with tragedy striking on her return voyage on MS Rangitane.

Her fourth book, due out in November, also has a war-time setting, partly in Egypt, where her grandfather served.

Beaumont has written 10 books. She describes *The War Photographers* as "a crime novel disguised as historical fiction".

The book tells a story set both in Britain during World War II and Berlin in the 1980s. It centres on a woman who worked in code-cracking at Bletchley Park, an unsolved



Snap... Olivia Spooner (left) and Sheryl Beaumont, with their latest novels at Spooner's Milford store the Booklover

crime, and the quest for answers to that takes her granddaughter to Germany. A New Zealand war photographer features, with the novel's opening set in Oamaru.

Both women enjoy the research that goes into their work.

Beaumont is now working on another novel, the third in a series based on the work of a forensic accountant, Kat Munro, who assists police with inquiries into matters such as money laundering, drug trafficking and cyber crime.

Beaumont sees parallels between the problem-solving nature of her day job as a director of Axiome Chartered Accountants and creating stories unravelling complex cases.

Despite her 10-year track record of having books published – including a young-adult series with art crimes and Nazi looting at its

heart – she is sticking with her day job. It may not involve tracking down war criminals, but it does offer the quiet satisfaction of helping a diverse range of clients solve tax problems and the like. "Accountancy always has a result," she says. And for the rest of her time: "The stories keep coming."

Both women are looking forward to attending the Auckland Writers Festival in May. Spooner is on a panel with two other authors discussing historical fiction.

Beaumont says books from the genre do so well because they bring alive the past in an approachable way.

"They're timeless in some ways, with the human aspect, the love, the friendship and families."

Spooner adds: "I find it easier to learn about history reading fiction."



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New Milford-based Barfoot and Thompson salesperson Rebecca Newsome brings a unique package of expertise to the role.

She has a deep understanding of the wider North Shore, personal experience in property investment, a proven ability to nurture lasting relationships and a wide multicultural network.

"I love the Shore," she says. "And I love getting the opportunity to introduce newcomers to everything these suburbs have to offer."

Mother-of-two Rebecca and husband Mark have lived on the North Shore for well over a decade, giving her a great understanding of what keeps these seaside suburbs buzzing. She makes the most of where she lives, spends her free time taking long walks on the beach with her dogs, at the tennis club or at the gym keeping herself in shape. "Everything is so handy," she says.

Along with the stunning local coastlines, she appreciates the area's cultural strengths – the theatres, galleries, library and quirky places to dine with family and friends. "We enjoy simple pleasures: taking our two elderly shih tzus to local cafes, supporting our children at the tennis club, or having a barbecue on our new deck."

Rebecca's entry into real-estate sales follows more than 14 years on her own personal property-investment journey, undertaken while also building a career in education – a field that tapped into her innate ability to connect people, foster trust and build lasting relationships.

"I'm looking forward to making a meaningful difference in my clients' lives, giving them the benefit of my experience and guiding them every step of the way," she says.

"After 20 years of being trusted to educate and care for families' priceless children, I am absolutely committed to earning that trust again and taking care of families' biggest assets – their real estate."

Born in Guangzhou, South China, Rebecca's life has been coloured by a rich tapestry of experiences and cultural connections. "My multicultural background and fluency in languages mean I can help clients from many different backgrounds," she says.

Rebecca is determined to bring a fresh perspective to the field. And anyone wanting her to assist them in buying or selling a property stands to benefit from her wide network and established rela-



tionships with existing buyers and investors.

In readiness for her new role, Rebecca has honed her expertise and gained invaluable insights into local market trends. She prides herself on having a sure grasp of sales data, demographic trends and the complexity of planning rules and changes. "My knowledge of the ever-changing North Shore scene is based on the latest information," she says.

Her suggested tip for first-time buyers: "Develop a regular saving habit or use KiwiSaver to save as much as possible by adjusting the contribution amount. The bank likes to see that you have a positive saving habit, making the lending process easier."

Rebecca recognises that dreams, aspirations and a vision for the future are behind every sale or purchase. "Through transparent communication, dedication and a genuine desire to serve, I want to be a trusted partner on every client's journey."

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As Kiwis, we love property. In fact, homes and real estate make up approximately 43% of total household assets in New Zealand. However, this love affair has started to sour for many indebted investors. The Official Cash Rate was at a low of 0.25% in September 2021 before rising sharply to 5.50% as of May 2023. Many investors have seen the rent they receive fail to keep up with their interest payments. The unshakeable faith in the rising New Zealand property market has also been tested with the average house price having fallen 13.2% from its March 2022 peak. While prices remain 24.3% higher than pre-Covid levels, there is a concern that if interest rates remain higher for longer, capital gains, the main driver of property investor returns, will be slow to return.

The tax landscape is improving for property investors, but is it enough?

There was hope that the current tax year would allow for a retrospective 60% interest deductibility rate to be applied this year. However, this failed to make it through the recent coalition negotiations and interest deductibility will remain at 50% for the 2023/24 tax year, before increasing to 80% in 2024/25 and moving to 100% in 2025/26. While this is good news for indebted property investors it will most likely reduce their tax burden rather than move their books back into the black.

So where does this leave the average Mum and Dad investor who just wanted to fund their golden years with the money earned from their investment property? In short, it depends on how much debt they were carrying on their investment property and what it is yielding. Property investors with debt have seen the free cash flow generated by their investment property portfolio dwindle or in many cases require them to make contributions to top up their mortgage. Even investors who own their investment properties debt free are in many cases earning a cash yield in the low single digits as rates and insurance costs rise.

With the incoming reduction of the Brightline test to two years many Kiwis are reassessing the use of rental property to fund their retirement. As well as the volatility in the investment property market, the burden of having to spend time dealing with tenant issues (every landlord will tell you, passive income from investment property is never truly passive),



and the lack of liquidity in their investment is prompting many property investors to look for investment alternatives. Drawing money above the cash yield from your rental property is very difficult: you can't just sell one of the bedrooms and property transaction costs can be exorbitant.

Most of the returns from investment property do not come from the cashflow but from capital gains. But just like you can't eat a spare bedroom, you also can't eat unrealised capital gains. Your retirement lifestyle need not be held hostage to how much cash flow your rental property throws off. Cashflows can be incredibly variable, and it doesn't make sense to have to adjust your retirement plans in the event that your investment property has a burst pipe or needs its roof replaced.

If not investment property, how can I fund my retirement spending goals?

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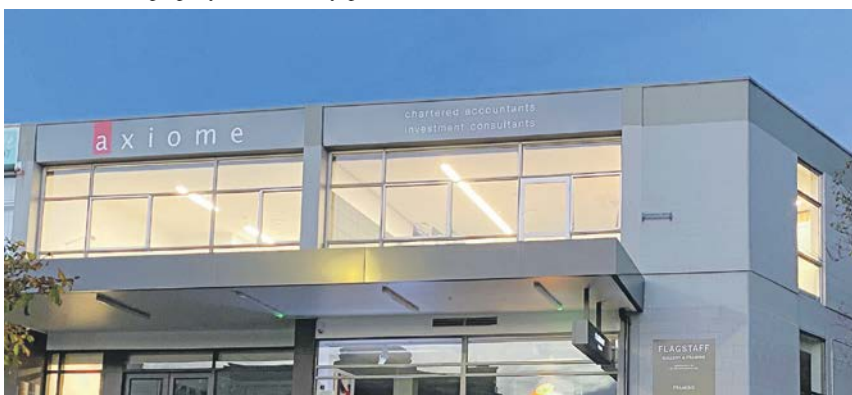
It can often be difficult after a lifetime of financially prudent behaviour to convince yourself to sell down hard-won assets and enjoy the proceeds. In retirement there are two broad financial strategies that our clients pursue. The first is to live off the cashflows of the assets that they have built up over a lifetime. The second is to sell down a portion of these assets to supplement the assets' cashflows to fund their lifestyle.

The choice of strategy and how quickly you sell down your assets will depend on considerations such as:

- Risk tolerance
- Personal health
- Lifestyle goals
- Inheritance / Philanthropy

Ultimately, these factors will determine what approach will allow you to attain your financial goals and support the lifestyle you envision for your retirement.

If you are interested in seeing how changing your asset mix to incorporate managed funds can unlock more cashflow from your portfolio please get in touch for a no-obligation free consultation session at www.axiome.co.nz.



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Chicks crafted for fundraiser

Knitters across the North Shore are working on an Easter project in support of Harbour Hospice.

They are making knitted chicks, like those pictured above, for sale in selected hospice shops, including in Milford, in the lead-up to Easter. Each \$8 chick has a chocolate Easter egg inside.

Among those whose needles have been flying is Milford resident Wynne Goddard (pictured at right), aged 88, who until recently was a regular volunteer of five years' standing at the local hospice shop.

Her knitting group meets every Tuesday at Milford Baptist Church hall. She says she loves the activity because it keeps her busy and is great social contact.

The idea for the fundraiser came from the neighbour of hospice's retail services manager Maria Baird, when the pair were out walking.

She told Baird that when living in England



Chickens in a basket... Wynne Goddard is among knitters involved in an Easter project to raise money for Harbour Hospice

she had knitted chicks for her local hospice there. A pattern was obtained and the call put out for knitters by volunteers services manager Vicki Parker.

More than a dozen people offered to cast

on for the project last year. Hospice would like the fundraiser to grow in future years.

Anyone keen to join in and start a stockpile for Easter 2025, or volunteer generally, can email Vicki at volunteer@harbourhospice.

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Street performers... Members of Nelson's Celtic Pipe Band enter The Strand in Takapuna



Out in front... The City of Sails Pipe Band was led by drum major Callum Thomson, whose 'mace flourishing' was judged the best at the championships



Looking on...Takapuna residents Aaron and Holly O'Neill heard the bagpipes and joined the crowd of spectators. Below: 'Big fans' of pipe bands Jan and Kevin Danswan travelled from Katikati to see the championships.



Tartan army marches into Takapuna

Thousands descended on Takapuna for the biggest pipe band competition outside of Scotland, the New Zealand Pipe Band Championships on 15 and 16 March. Around 1500 people took part in the competition, held in Onewa Domain, with thousands more watching and supporting. On Saturday, 41 bands paraded along Byron Ave, Lake Rd and the Strand. The Canterbury Caledonian Society Pipe Band were the top-division championship winners.



Eyes right... City of Dunedin drum major Brent Cooper salutes national Pipe Band Association president Iain Blakeley during the march-past

PICTURES: LOCHLAN LINEHAM

Last parade closes drum major's 60-year career



Auckland Police Pipe Band drum major Eddie Eeles was overcome with emotion during his final march with the band. Eeles has been a drum major for six decades, having 40 years with the Auckland and District Pipe Band and 20 with the police band. The 81-year-old said while he had mixed feelings about hanging up the drum major's mace, it felt like the "right time". His departure was commemorated at the end of the march, when members of the City of Sails Auckland and District and police bands band formed a guard of honour to acknowledge him.

Covid no barrier as mum enjoys Jacko's big win



Nerida Gill managed to see her son Jacko beat rival Tom Walsh to the national shot-put title for the second year in a row this month, even though she had Covid.

She and husband Walter travelled to Wellington to support Jacko, along with other athletes they coach from the Takapuna Athletics Club who were representing Auckland at the New Zealand championships.

Both of them came down with Covid and Walter injured his back, but Nerida was undeterred, heading to the Newtown Park venue and watching her son's performance from outside the stadium.

"I was jumping for joy behind the fence," she told the Flagstaff. "I had a big smile on my face but you couldn't see it through the mask." Unfortunately, Walter's back was so sore he had to sit in the car nearby.

Although both Walsh and Gill were throwing below their best, the competition was intense, Nerida said.

Gill defended his title with a best throw of 21.57m to finish just six centimetres ahead of Walsh, who two weeks earlier took silver at the world indoor championships. Gill, aged 29, was fifth in Glasgow.

"It's always amazing to get a win over Tom," Nerida said. "To come out on top by six centimetres shows how close it was."

After the meet, Jacko had headed to Russell as part of a week off, but was looking for a gym so he could still do some training during the break, Nerida said. "He finds if he takes even a week off doing weights, he feels sore coming back to it."

Jacko will travel to Europe for more competitions a couple of months ahead of the Olympics, which start in Paris in late July.

His mother plans to be there to see him compete.

Other club members with eyes on Paris are polevaulters Eliza McCartney and Imogen Ayris. McCartney won her fifth national title in Wellington, easily clearing 4.70m, with Ayris in second on 4.39m.

McCartney, aged 27, raised the bar to 4.86m, a mark which would have bettered her New Zealand resident record, but was unable to clear it. Her form this year has been excellent, however.

"I was really happy with my 4.70m jump," she said. "It has been a bit tough on the body coming from the UK."

In women's shotput, former Takapuna club athlete Kaia Tupu-South, on a trip back from college in the United States, was second to national champion Maddison Lee-Wesche. Two other club throwers coached by Walter Gill, medalled. Kate Hallie, aged 17, came first in the under-20 shotput final, second in the U18 grade and third in U18 discus. Connor Brady won the U16 shotput and javelin and was second in both U16 100m and 300m hurdles and in the winning age group 4x100 and 4x400m teams.

Club runner Sam Lathwood was in the winning U20 4x100 team and James Ford was second behind regular rival and fellow Devonport resident Thomas Cowan in the U20 800m.

Champions... Jacko Gill (above) during the national championships in Wellington. Below: Eliza McCartney, who won the women's pole vault





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Double throwing threat Karmen chases more gold

Karmen Maritz, a Year 12 student at Westlake Girls High School, is an ambitious rising athletics star, having recently collected the under-18 shotput and discus double at New Zealand Track and Field Championships.

She also came fourth in the senior women's shot-put event at the event in Wellington held from 14-17 March.

The 16-year-old told the Observer she was happy with her wins against strong competition.

"I am always competing against my own PB's so winning with distances close to my personal bests is a really good feeling."

At the nationals she came up against the U20 shotput winner Kate Hallie, 17, whom she pipped in the U18 final.

This time last year, Karmen won the U16 shotput and discus at the national championships.

At secondary school nationals last December, she won the double again, in the junior grade, where she broke the discus record and set a personal best in shot put. This led to her being named junior girls athlete of the tournament and winning a place in the New Zealand Secondary Schools track and field team.

Karmen, who grew up Sunnynook, has been doing athletics since she was five years old but started the throwing events when she was seven.

"I actually liked running and jumping when I first started more than the throwing."

She now competes for the Harbour Bays Club as well as Westlake. After this week's Auckland schools athletics championships and an expected trip to the North Island championships, she will compete at the Australian Track and Field Championships in April.

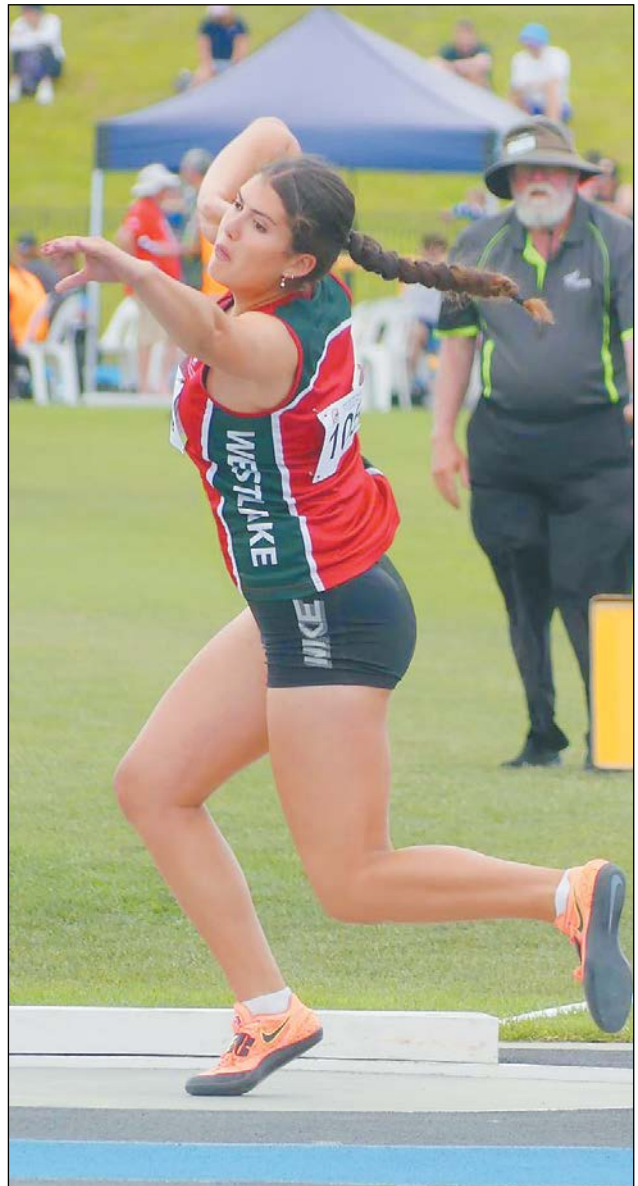
The prospect of competing against top competition in Australia is exciting as she says she performs better under pressure. "I love competition and people pushing me to work harder."

Karmen said she aimed to throw personal bests in both shotput and discus, which would hopefully earn a place on the podium in Australia.

Despite regular success in both throwing events, Karmen said she puts most of her focus into discus. "I also just find it more satisfying watching the discus fly through the air, which is why I train mostly discus and do shot put more for fun."

In the short term, she wants to record a 50m discus throw in competition.

"In the long term I will want to be competing overseas more and experience comps like World Juniors and hopefully one day the big ones like the Commonwealth Games and Olympics."



Top thrower... Westlake Girls High School athlete Karmen Maritz in action



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Young Takapuna players have shot at national under-20s

Takapuna Rugby Club's premier side are heading into the 2024 season with a contingent of young guns aiming for higher honours.

Locks Jack Lee and Cam Christie and flanker Tristyn Cook were members of an Auckland Blues under-20 team which took part in a recent tournament.

Takapuna coach Nick Elrick said all three were in contention for the New Zealand team which will compete at the World Rugby U20 Championships in South Africa from 29 June to 19 July.

If any of the trio makes the team, they would likely still be back in time to play for Takapuna from the quarter-final stage of the North Harbour club championship.

Elrick was philosophical about any potential disruption.

"It's unfortunate for the team perhaps, but as a club and a coach what we want to do is to create a platform for players to develop and step up to higher levels."

This had happened with Moses Leo, a New Zealand sevens player, who was unlikely to see much game time with Takapuna this season as the sevens side sets its sights on the Paris Olympics in late July.



Tristyn Cook

Likewise, Lotu and Finau Inisi were in the Moana Pasifika Super Rugby team and would only come back into the Takapuna side late in the season. Halfback Asia Halo was also in the Moana Pasifika frame, getting game time with a development side.

Overall though, the premiers squad was looking strong, and showed good form in the John Spiers Trophy preseason tournament run by the Counties Rugby Union, beating Pukekohe, Patumahoe and Manurewa.

Elrick, who has taken over from Aaron Katipa, said he was looking forward to the challenge – and hopefully avenging Takapuna's loss to arch-rivals North Shore in last season's championship final.

"You always hope to go one better," he said.

Elrick has been at the Takapuna club since he began playing as a junior in 1994. He has coached at under-19 and under-21 level, and also coached a North Harbour age-group side. Last year he was assistant coach to Katipa.

Veteran player Shane Neville has hung up his boots and joins Elrick as assistant coach.

- Takapuna plays its first competition match of the season against Kumeu at Onewa Domain on 6 April at 2.45 pm.

Sports Briefs

Rowers third at Maadi

Westlake Boys High School claimed two medals and Westlake Girls one at the Maadi Cup Regatta last week. The WBHS under-15 and under-16 eights each came third in their respective A finals at the national championships at Lake Ruataniwha on 23 March. The school qualified for another seven A finals. WGHS's under-16 coxed-four came third in their A final. WGHS crews qualified for two other A finals.

Takapuna FC beaten

Takapuna FC lost their season opener to Onehunga Mangere United 1-3 last Saturday at Taharoto Park. The visitors went up early in the match before Sean Willcox drew level for Takapuna in the 30th minute. Goals from Onehunga Mangere in the 45th and 54th minutes sealed victory.

WBHS wins softball

Westlake Boys High School's softball team won the New Zealand Secondary School title in Rosedale last week, beating Alfriston College 7-0 in the final to be crowned national champions for the first time since 1984. Westlake was twice defeated by Alfriston earlier in the tournament.

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Letter

Why not appoint an umpire to resolve track issue?

At 11am this morning I accessed the Takapuna-Milford walkway from Audrey Lane and noted six assorted padlocks on the locked steel gate. More than 20 people were trying to scramble over the rocks adjacent to the Firth property and about 30 young school children, which is highly dangerous.

While it is generally accepted that the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board has received a ‘hospital pass’ to try to resolve this matter, it is disappointing to note that various council staff appear to be dreaming up excuses to wipe council’s hands of the matter.

Talking to several locals, this is not a problem that will simply go away.

The government is advocating walking to stimulate physical and mental health.

The suggested alternative route is impossible for the elderly, the disabled and families with prams.

It might be time for council to consider appointing an arbitrator or umpire to try to reach a speedy and amicable solution with both parties and investigate alternative funding options including:

1. A special Lotto.
2. Land exchanges with other council and Ngati Whatua o Orakei land.
3. Contributions from benefactors, residents, businesses and building-supply companies, etc.

Bruce Tubb

Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters on local issues that are not overly long. Noms-de-plume or unnamed submissions will not be printed.

Email to news@rangitoto-observer.co.nz or post to Rangitoto Observer, PO Box 32 275, Devonport

Local board opposes amalgamation

The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board is opposing a plan to soon combine it with Kaipatiki, fearing local voices will be lost.

“It seems it’s going to be a shotgun arrangement to get this through in 18 months,” said member George Wood at a board meeting last week.

A council working group is developing plans for a reorganisation to be in place for the next local body election in 2025, although some boards want this delayed until 2028.

Amalgamation would create a new local board, called North Shore, with 12 members – compared with 14 representing Devonport-Takapuna (6) and Kaipatiki (8).

Devonport-Takapuna members have expressed concern no detailed case for change has been made. In formal feedback, they noted residents of the area were highly engaged, with one of the city’s highest voter turnouts.

They called for a proper inquiry into the form and functioning of council itself, including the model of larger geographic councils proposed in a pre-Auckland Council royal commission.

The board also opposed a proposal to make all local-board positions full-time roles. “This will lead to a decrease in diversity of representation,” it said, noting that the candidate pool would be reduced in favour of those who had already retired or had specific political ambitions.

Wood said a larger grouping of more of the northern boards might be a better option than merging just two.

The proposals will be further developed this year and referred to the Local Government Commission to consider in September. If approved, they would then need council sign-off by April 2024 to be in effect the following year.

On plans by Mayor Wayne Brown to better empower local boards, feedback was in favour of boards having more decentralised say over spending in their area, including that by council organisations, such as Auckland Transport.

Having video conferences with other boards was also advocated to streamline multiple council briefings.

St Peter’s project benefits from 15k council heritage grant

St Peter’s Anglican Church in Takapuna has received a \$15,000 contribution of public funds for its preservation and restoration project.

But the money from Auckland Council’s Regional Historic Heritage Grants Programme will cover just a fraction of the work needed on the landmark church building.

Vicar Nathan de Senna says much more fundraising will be needed, with the church just shy of halfway to a \$4 million target.

Parishioners would meet after Easter to discuss starting the work in stages. Further fundraising options were in the pipeline, he said.

The priority work is structural reinforcement to meet earthquake-strengthening standards, and a new roof, drainage and electrics, expected to cost \$3 million.

De Senna said while the grant was short

of what the church had hoped for, it all helped.

“We tried to get a bit more, but a ton of different organisations were wanting money.”

Council choose 27 community groups from 55 applicants seeking heritage grants in a city-wide annual allocation.

Frank Sargeson House on Esmonde Rd was the only other North Shore recipient of funds, the trust that runs it being granted \$3200 for maintenance.

Grants totalled \$500,000, ranging from \$3000 up to \$50,000, with the largest allocated to the former Fitzroy hotel in the central city.

Another big beneficiary was a bach needing restoration on Rangitoto Island, which received \$20,000. It is one of five managed by the Rangitoto Island Historic Conservation Trust.

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Artist's recipe: Take a lump and add everything

Sculptor Bill Hayes enjoys shaping his creations from clay and with fire.

He finds working with an elemental material connects him to ancient cultures, but also allows him to pursue his own distinct vision.

Clay, he says, "is just a lump and you bring everything to it – you have to really express yourself with it".

For his latest exhibition, Hayes is working solely in ceramics. Sometimes he casts sculptures in bronze, often on commission.

His expertise also sees him called in to help restore the public work of others. He has worked on Devonport's 'untidy soldier' war memorial three or four times.

In his studio at the Lake House Arts Centre – where Hayes has been based for more than 25 years – he is finishing the last pieces for his show opening at Art by the Sea in Takapuna on 6 April.

Many of the 30 to 40 works are already boxed. Some, up to 1.5 metres tall, sit on work benches.

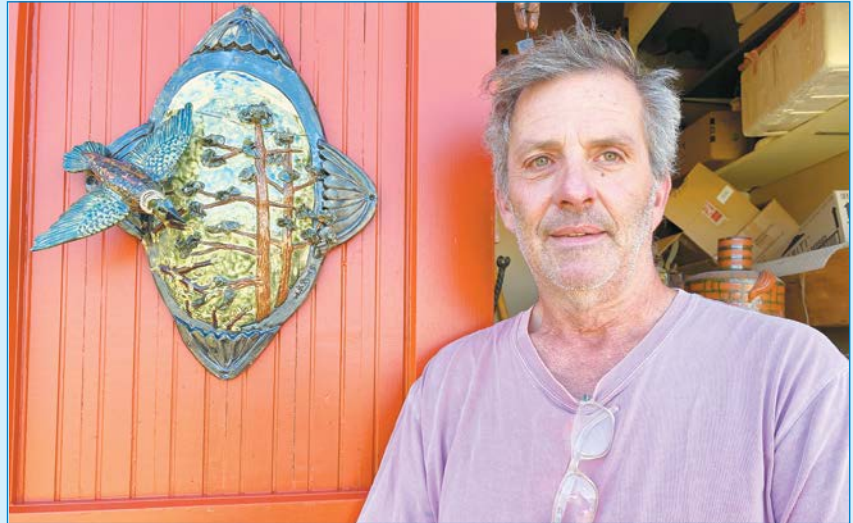
"Initially it was going to be a bird-series focus," Hayes says.

But over six months he has added other less-decorated vessels. They supplement the glazed vases and plaques adorned by birds, solo or in flocks.

Other recurring subjects include fish and boats. "I do a lot of sailing," he explains.

The American-born artist says his first bird work was made at school when he was eight years old. That is when his fascination with ceramics began, leading him to take classes at high school then university.

After growing up in upstate New York, he moved to San Francisco, living in a colourful art precinct. His studio was in a building repurposed by the city when the owners got behind on the rates. It provided shelter for the homeless and creative spaces. He even rode his motorbike into it. "It was the oldest non-profit arts centre in the city."



Bird's eye view... Bill Hayes at his Lake House Arts studio, with one of the ceramics he will show at Art by the Sea gallery in Takapuna from next week

Hayes met his Kiwi wife at a party for his 31st birthday in California. "We came here for a year 25 years ago," he laughs. The couple, who have three children, live in St Marys Bay.

Hayes connected with the Lake House soon after arriving in Auckland. Chris Johns, one of the North Shore people involved in setting up the arts centre when the heritage building was shifted in parts to its Fred Thomas Dr site, introduced him to local arts champion Genevieve Becroft.

She offered him studio space upstairs, but when he pointed out his heavy bronze pieces might prove tricky to lug up steps he was instead given a corner room on the north-west side of the ground floor. He put in floors and wall linings.

The studio is still called the Hayes Room, though Hayes himself moved to a separate space at the rear of the main building a few

years ago.

For about 10 years he ran the centre's ceramics programme, but he no longer teaches, saying: "The creative energy drains away."

Instead, he works on exhibitions and commissions. He is a member of the Medallion Group of artists who make small two-sided relief bronzes. He has also made giant ceramic totems.

Commissions include bronze entranceways and fountains, a memorial at the Chelsea sugar factory in Birkenhead and plaques for the Sir Edmund Hillary ice axe memorabilia case at Auckland Museum.

Hayes has also turned his hand to glass casting over the years but working in metal and ceramics is what most inspires him.

He marvels that ceramics made in similar ways to his have been found in the ocean from 10,000 years ago. "They can polish up and look just as colourful."

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Return to local-theatre stage snares award for

A local arts centre manager has won an award for his performance in last year's Shakespeare in the Park in Takapuna – his first foray into community theatre in decades.

Grae Burton's performance as Antony in Antony and Cleopatra at the PumpHouse outdoor amphitheatre earned him the best actor award at the recent Auckland Community Theatre Awards.

Burton, who is the manager at Lake House Arts in Fred Thomas Dr, said he was shocked to be given the award. "I was really surprised that I got nominated. Number one, I didn't even know there were awards.

"I was thrilled, I was not expecting to win."

The play was Burton's first return to community theatre since 1998, aside from a one-man-show fundraiser he staged at the Rose Centre several years ago.

He said he wanted to do the Shakespeare season because he still had an itch for acting.

The Nelson native's first job in the entertainment industry was as a test actor for Peter Jackson's *The Frighteners* in 1995, when Jackson was working out how to use motion-control before his cast arrived.

In the 2000s, Burton started a theatre and arts centre in Nelson called The Independent.

"We did classics, we did avant garde theatre – everything that could possibly lose money, we did it."

The company was liquidated in 2009, but the relative success of a Stephen Papps show it put on at the PumpHouse, in its final year, prompted Burton to move to Auckland.

After losing money "hand over fist" touring the show, a season at the PumpHouse covered costs despite lacklustre ticket sales.

Burton worked as videographer, then



Day job... Grae Burton in his Lake House Arts office and (opposite page) on stage during his award-winning performance in *Antony and Cleopatra*

as tour manager for the Ugly Shakespeare Company for six months.

He went on to be a freelance actor, director, producer, visual artist and playwright in Auckland until becoming the manager at Lake House Arts in 2017.

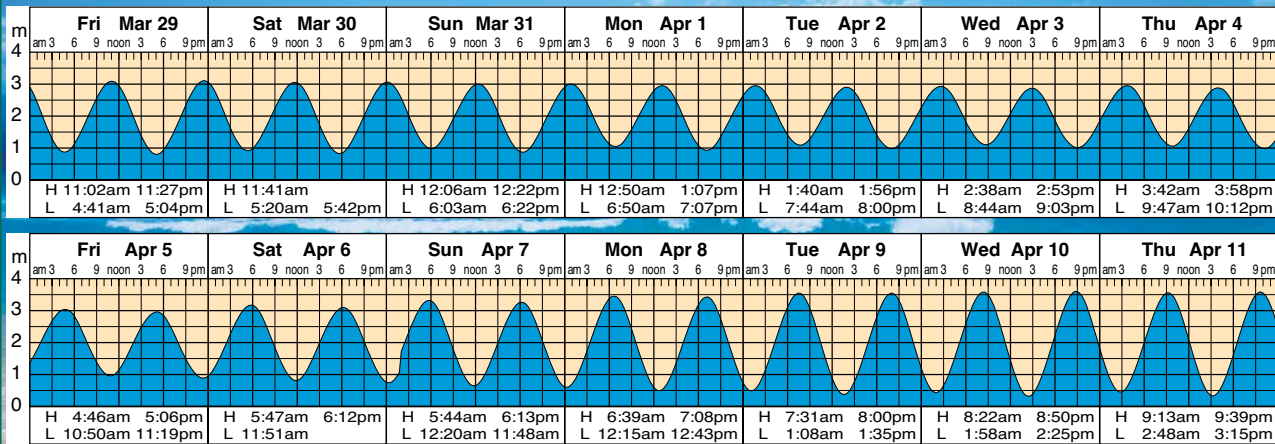
He had numerous plays produced and was cast as an actor in TV shows such as *Underbelly: Land of the Long Green Cloud*, *Shortland Street*, *The Brokenwood Mysteries* and the web series *AFK*.

Back in 1998 Burton was in an episode of *Young Hercules* alongside Ryan Gosling, who he found easygoing, and attitude-free. "He just wanted to be friends and know people and be a part of the community."

Burton recently directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for this year's Shakespeare in the Park.

He's planning on being involved in next year's season, too, but isn't sure in what capacity.

Milford / Takapuna Next Fortnight's Tides



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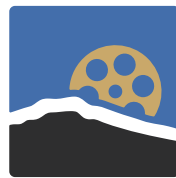


Aspiring actor wins minor-role prize

An aspiring North Shore actor who went from roles at school to parts in Shoreside Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park over the last two years has been recognised for her performance in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Sofia Shaw won best actor in a minor role in the recently announced 2023 Auckland Community Theatre Awards, after the former Northcote College student took a lead role in this summer's Shakespeare season of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* staged in Takapuna

The production was directed by Shoreside Theatre committee member James Bell, who said Shaw's win was a big achievement and met one of the Forrest Hill-based company's aspirations, to develop young local talent.



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Wicked Little Letters (M) 102min	NEW
Kung Fu Panda 4 (PG) 94min	

Previews 29 MAR - 2 APR

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Kung Fu Panda 4 (PG) 94min	4 APR
Love Lies Bleeding (R16) 104min	4 APR
Civil War (TBA) 109min	11 APR
Late Night with the Devil (R13) 92min	11 APR
The Tiger's Apprentice (PG) 81min	11 APR

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