

scene magazine

IT'S ALL ABOUT **WHANGAREI**

no.112/SEPTEMBER2018



LONDON CALLING

MEGAN SMITH / AUTHOR

FINDS HER HEART AND MOVES
TO THE WORLD'S GREATEST CITY

ACTING FOR AGES

WHANGAREI REPERTORY
SOCIETY TURNS 70

FROM ROOT TO TIP

TWO YOUNG GIRLS
ARE KITCHEN WHIZZES



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COVER 08



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COVER/ LONDON CALLING

London-based Megan Smith (née Walsh) is a former Head Girl at Whangarei Girls High School. A career in the IT industry took her to Sydney, where she worked for Google. But the world she knew imploded when her father, Trevor, died from brain cancer.

Struggling to come to terms with her loss, Megan and husband Mark took a year off from their work-focused lives and travelled the world. Megan's lifelong love of writing found expression in a personal memoir about that journey of discovery and acceptance of loss. *Lost Heart Found* was published earlier this year. It is very good.

Megan's down-to-earth and distinctively Kiwi style pulls no punches, tackling boldly the complex and heart-rending nature of grief, while offering insights and anecdotes of people and places found along the way.

TRAVEL • 08

COVER IMAGE: iStockphoto

SAVOUR • WINNERS, ROOT TO TIP
Ten-year-old friends Holly Patterson and Madyson Picard recently won a nationwide cooking contest. Proud parents Deborah Patterson and Tilly Tihema explain that triumph and the 'Root to Tip' philosophy. • 04

ARTS • ACTING FOR AGES
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MR ED/ THE PAIN! THE PAIN!



STEVE CHALLIS
EDITOR-PUBLISHER

We poor long-suffering Kiwis are one of the most heavily taxed nations in the civilised world. Probably because we are so civilised, we've forgotten how to protest – so the 'powers that be' get away with it! But that's another story.

As middle age kicks in, I seem to have become resigned to the shocking and unjust reality that tells me there is no end to demands for 'my' money.

If it's not the Gummit ramping up fuel tax, dubious 'compliance' costs and Lord knows what else, there's this never-ending raft of good and worthy causes saying: *Pick me. Deposit your money here!* See logos of three worthy causes, stage left!

Speaking of ages and stages, our article about Whangarei Repertory Society includes a contribution of reminiscences from that stalwart of the local stage (and backstage), Carol Freebairn. Astonishingly, Carol has been involved in the rise and rise of the Octagon Theatre for over 40 years.

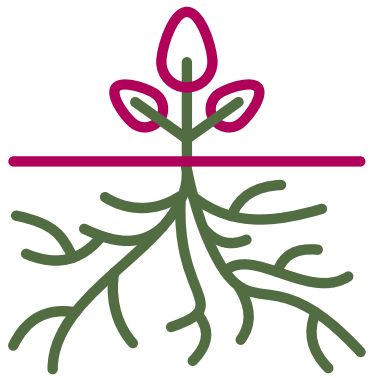
In stark contrast, Parua Bay School students Holly Patterson and Madyson Picard are just getting started! These ten-year-old pals are whizzes in the kitchen, winners of the nationwide 'Root to Tip' cooking contest. You might like to try to make Madyson and Holly's Veggie Patch Burger in your own kitchen.

Spring is sprung. Enjoy every moment.



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WINNERS FROM ROOT TO TIP

PARENTS **DEBORAH PATTERSON** & **TILLY TIHEMA** EXPLAIN HOW THEIR 10-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTERS, HOLLY AND MADYSON, WON THE NATIONAL 'ROOT TO TIP' COOKING CONTEST. TWO KITCHEN WHIZZES!

My daughter Holly (Patterson) has always had a passion for being in the kitchen. On many weekends she has baked for her own enjoyment and to bring happiness to others in the sharing of her baking. I heard about the 'Root to Tip' cooking competition and thought that it sounded like a great way to extend Holly's love of being in the kitchen to include preparing and cooking meals.

Holly and Madyson are close friends, go to the same school (Parua Bay) and had already enjoyed baking together. So when looking for a cooking partner, Madyson was super-keen and an easy choice.



First off the girls had to prepare a two-course meal that fitted in with the seasonal and locally-grown produce requirements. Fruit, vegetables and herbs were readily available by way of their own gardens and from Holly's grandparents. We also sourced produce from local orchards. The decision on how to use vegetables 'from root to tip' was also born here, with a recipe to use leftover carrot tops in a Salsa and beetroot leaves in the burger, all being completely edible.

Holly and Madyson put in an online entry and practised cooking the dishes even before they were selected for the regional heats. Finding out their online entry was a winner meant the girls had a two-hour 'cookoff' at NorthTec in Whangarei. This meant a lot of nights after school or at weekends meeting up at each other's houses and 'training' to perfect the recipes and improve skills. Then the question: Can we cook this

meal in two hours? Out came the timers!

Cooking against four other teams did bring on some nerves, but for Holly and Madyson when the cookoff began nothing mattered but the task at hand and producing the best dishes.

These two junior chefs worked their way around the kitchen with grace and confidence. I could tell they were having a brilliant time. Their teamwork was strikingly evident and noted by the judges.

After winning that regional heat in Whangarei the girls immersed their time into eliminating any trace of edible waste that was left over – even working on ways to use onion and garlic skins by deep frying them, and using up lemon peel by using a sugar syrup and making candied lemon.

In the national finals in Wellington they showcased the new skills they had learnt and implemented – such as whipping and quenelling cream, making candied lemon peel, cooking up the apple core and



presenting their dishes with more flair.

Before this competition the thought of my 10-year-old using a deep fryer, handling boiling syrup, or even chopping vegetables with large knives was out of the question in case of injury. I found out it is all about the mentoring.

I know now it is really important to be the mother who teaches their child kitchen skills, the earlier the better. Patience is key. Give them the chance to show you they are capable; these two kids have flourished with praise. Both now handle knives with ease and are empowered, more knowledgeable – and a huge help when it comes to family dinners!

The time spent as two families has been fun; we've all enjoyed days of sampling different flavours and eating the meals prepared by Holly and Madyson. Given the chance to compete again, both girls definitely would. This experience has given us all a love of the 'Root to Tip' philosophy. ■



IMAGES

Top, from left to right: The 'Root to Tip' cooking competition is part of the school-based Garden To Table programme, which builds skills for life through highly practical, hands-on classes. It teaches growing and cooking skills, and builds awareness of individual and collective responsibility for the environment, healthy eating and community connectedness. Children learn how to grow, harvest, prepare and share fresh, seasonal food.

Left, from left to right: Tilly TiHEMA and her daughter Madyson Picard; Deborah Patterson and her daughter Holly.

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Madyson and I didn't understand the level of commitment required when she agreed to team up with Holly to take part in the 'Root to Tip' competition. The event seemed like a fun thing to do and winning was merely a dream at that stage.

Since Holly had chosen a dessert, Madyson really wanted to make her Nana's Fried Bread for the main meal. That got me thinking ... what on earth can we make featuring fried bread? Soup? A burger? We could use fried bread instead of burger buns! The inspiration came because in our home we often have homemade burgers for dinner. Madyson and her younger sister, Melody, enjoy making their own burgers and love eating them.

My role was primarily supportive – supporting Madyson by involving her in all planning and decision-making processes, providing opportunities to be in the kitchen, taxi-ing her here and there, being in the kitchen overseeing, directing or encouraging.

Being partnered with Holly, I was there to support her, too, as well as her mum Deborah – and vice versa. Another important factor was providing opportunities for fun, so that Madyson and Holly could function better as a team.

Initially, this competition highlighted for me Madyson's lack of knife skills. I had images of Madyson cutting herself, and blood everywhere! Madyson didn't use kitchen knives much, let alone sharp ones. But all contestants were expected to demonstrate knife skills.

So she watched a YouTube video presented by NZ chef Al Brown and received tips from me, along with helpful advice from other adults.

Give them the chance to show you they are capable; these two kids have flourished with praise. Both now handle knives with ease and are empowered ...

With lots of practice, she was soon handling sharp knives safely and using knives to peel, chop or slice fruit and vegetables. Even more impressive was her understanding of the importance of working with a sharp knife and seeing her sharpen her knife before use.

I was quietly confident that they could win the regional Root to Tip competition, but apprehensive about their chances of winning the National competition held in Wellington.

So when Madyson phoned me at work to say that they had just won first place, I was surprised, happy and speechless! My work colleagues were shouting congratulations down the telephone line to her.

The feedback that we had received from the judges at the regional competition was immensely helpful to the girls and contributed to their win. So too was input from family and friends.

Everyone's hard work paid off. ■

GARDEN TO TABLE

GROW, HARVEST, PREPARE, SHARE

MADYSON & HOLLY'S VEGGIE PATCH BURGER WITH DEEP-FRIED CARROT & PARSNIP RIBBONS

/NANA'S FRIED BREAD

Ingredients

1 cup Standard Flour
2 cups High Grade Flour
2 heaped teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup water (a mix of boiling/tap water – 2/3 boiling and 1/3 tap)
Pumpkin seeds – optional
Canola oil, for frying

Method

Pour canola oil into pot, about 1.5cm deep. Heat oil to 180°C. Place flour, baking powder and salt into a bowl and mix to combine. Add water – to form a dough. Flatten dough out on a lightly floured board. Cut into desired shape, press on pumpkin seeds. Fry. Cut in half horizontally when cool.

/CARROT PATTIES

Ingredients

4 medium carrots, grated, with skin on
½ cup standard flour
¼ teaspoon baking powder
2 Tablespoons corn flour
Salt – 20 grinds
Pepper – 3 grinds
Chilli powder – 3 pinches
2 Tablespoons milk
1 egg
2 Tablespoons Italian parsley, chopped
1 small onion, chopped
1 clove of garlic, chopped

Method

Using a food processor, *grate* carrots. *Chop* onion, garlic and Italian parsley, add to carrots. Put all other ingredients into food processor. *Blitz*. *Shape into patties* on an oven tray with baking paper. Fan bake at 200°C for 25 minutes.

/CARROT TOP SALSA

Ingredients

1 cup carrot top leaves, chopped
1½ Tablespoon oregano, chopped
1 large garlic clove, chopped
Juice and zest from 1 lemon
1 Tablespoon sweet chilli sauce
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
1/8 cup red wine vinegar

Method

Roughly chop carrot top leaves, oregano and garlic. *Blitz* together in a mini blender. Transfer to a bowl and add lemon zest and juice. Place remaining ingredients into mixture. Stir, cover and chill.

/EXTRA INGREDIENTS NEEDED FOR BURGER

Mesclun leaves, beetroot leaves – washed and removed from the beetroot
Grated beetroot – with skin on

/ASSEMBLING THE BURGER

Bottom bun, beetroot leaves, mesclun leaves, carrot patty, grated beetroot, carrot top salsa, top bun

/CARROT & PARSNIP RIBBONS

Ingredients

1 carrot and 1 parsnip, peeled with skin on
Canola oil, for deep frying
Salt – for seasoning

Method

Peel vegetables into thin ribbons. Pat dry with absorbent paper. Heat oil in frying pan at moderate to high heat. Deep-fry carrot in small batches, until they just turn brown. Remove with a slotted spoon. Repeat with the parsnip. Place cooked veges onto a plate with absorbent paper to drain off excess oil and to crisp up. Season.



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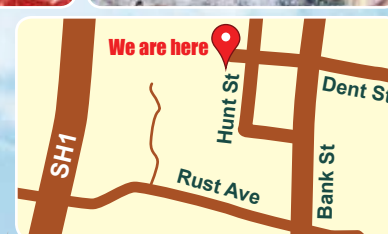
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TESTIMONIAL

"My children were so happy and excited to go to Smiths City, they would ask to go at the weekend!"
– Parent





WHANGAREI REPERTORY SOCIETY TURNED 70 EARLIER THIS YEAR. **STEVE CHALLIS** PROFILES THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE 'LITTLE THEATRE' THAT BOXES WELL ABOVE ITS WEIGHT.

In human terms 70 years is a grand enough milestone, but if 70 is the new 50, then Whangarei Repertory Society is all grown up and full of life as it enters early middle age! With Baby Boomers and Generations X, Y and Z all contributing as new committee members, backstage crews, stage designers, lighting and sound engineers, directors and cast, the future is looking bright.

It all started in April 1948, when a small band of theatre enthusiasts got

together to form Whangarei Repertory Society Inc. After a series of different makeshift venues over the next 30 years, the Society set up permanent residence at an old villa at 13 Aubrey Street, in 1978.

The Society breathed new life into the 'grand old dame' and, with the addition of the new octagonal auditorium (hence 'The Octagon'), the Society now entertains about 2,200 patrons each year with a three-course dining experience and show at a very affordable price. The emphasis is on a 'theatre with dining' rather than a 'dinner theatre' experience.

In the past 70 years Whangarei Repertory Society has staged more than 230 productions, employed more than 1,500 actors, directors and designers, and injected more than \$2 million into Whangarei.

By all accounts they've gone through 1,000 litres of paint, countless acres of fabric, 14,000 metres of masking tape (only some of it to shut people up!), 10,500,000 nails, screws and staples, and they've cooked and served 100,000 meals. Approximately.

All of it on the proverbial 'smell of an oily rag'. As a not-for-profit charitable organisation, they rely heavily on donations, grants, membership fees and even bequests, as all participants – onstage and backstage, not forgetting heroic dining, waiting and dishwashing staff – are unpaid volunteers. The one thing to bind them all is a passion for the theatre and, especially, amateur dramatics and/or musical revues.

The current President is Repertory stalwart Carol Freebairn, who has seen many changes since she and her late husband, Barry, joined the society in 1975.

There have been many challenging times, most involving money, or lack of it. Carol was one of several committee members boldly 'doing the can-can' and busking in Cameron Street in order to raise funds! Camp stoves once had to be set up on the floor of the old Town Hall Chambers, to heat cups of soup for hungry patrons awaiting curtain call.

Now with a 50-seat auditorium and dining room offering a comfy and intimate theatre experience, Whangarei Repertory Society has clearly come a long way.

Recently installed computerised LED stage lighting and computer-generated graphics, music and sound effects, means the Society is successfully transitioning from older technologies to the new, and noticing the change in audience

demographics as younger generations are coming to appreciate the artistic talents in our district. Whangarei Repertory Society is also conscious of the need to meet the expectations of the newer generations, while still fulfilling the expectations of its loyal and steadfast older audiences.

As you might expect, there are countless hilarious anecdotes to be told of behind-the-scenes challenges (and solutions that quickly had to be found), mostly for the benefit of oblivious audiences. We'll mention just one here, the time when Carol's late centenarian mother, the diminutive and indomitable Meg Legg (who could forget her!), swiftly averted a disaster. Dinner for the whole audience for one extra performance night had been completely overlooked. At short notice (ie none!) protein was sourced from a certain Colonel's chicken franchise nearby – and served with some fresh garden veges – much to the waiting patrons' delight!

Yes, the human factor is always paramount, despite all the techno-babble. Holograms can never replace the actors on stage, the team behind the curtains and the hardworking troupers in the dining room.

Let's raise a glass to the fantabulous Octagon Theatre and Whangarei Repertory Society's next 70 years. Break a leg!

IMAGES: Peter Romer

Top to bottom, both pages, from left: Octagon Theatre, 13 Aubrey St; murder aftermath – *The Mousetrap* 2011; first date, first impressions – *Looking* 2016; Teddy's reveal – *Curtain Up* 2018; Carol Freebairn, President; positive outcomes – *Calendar Girls* 2017.



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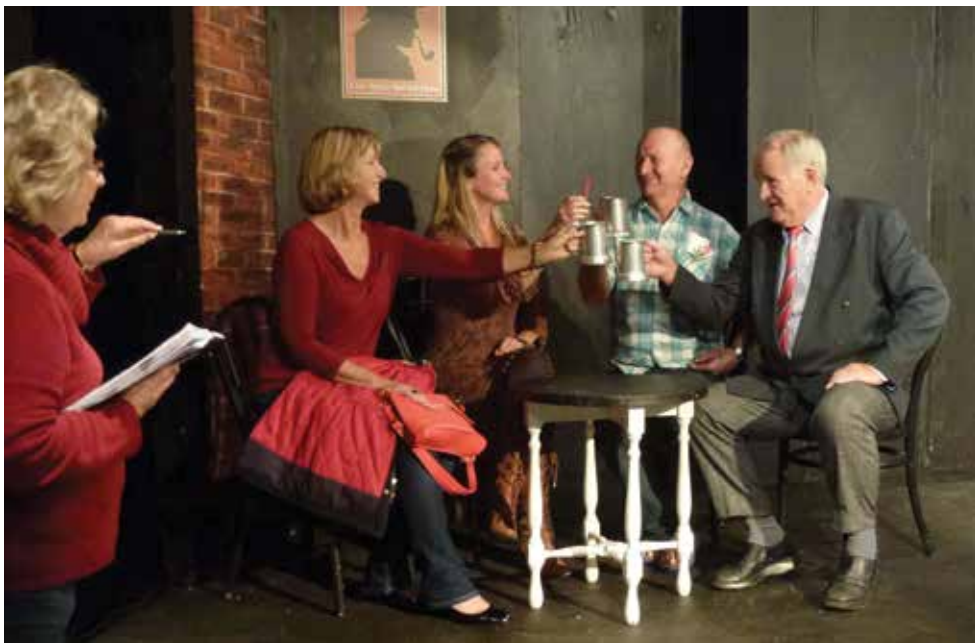
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BY CAROL FREEBAIRN

I joined Whangarei Repertory Society in 1975 after attending a performance of One-Act Plays. I had been involved with amateur theatre in England prior to arriving in New Zealand in 1972, so the seed had already been sown.

I took on the position of Secretary to give Jean Davis a break. Jean and her husband John (the Treasurer), along with the President, Pat Hill, were influential in my early days. I was Secretary for many years. (More recently, I've had the role of President intermittently. The current length of tenure is 15 years!)

The committee were discussing, at that time, how best to make a more permanent home for the Society. Our 'Music Hall' performances at the Settlers Motor Inn were a source of income, albeit a slow one.

Once it was established that we could make 13 Aubrey Street our permanent home, we needed to decide what to do.

A certain Barry Freebairn, my husband, joined the Society, came on to the committee and said: "You need to get a bank loan." Loud gasps were heard as it seemed like such a mammoth task.

That is how 'The Octagon' was born. I have searched through the long list of productions and counted that I have performed in 61 productions and have been involved in other ways in many more.

The productions which stand out in my mind from the Society's point of view are:

/NOAH

The first production in the newly-built Octagon Theatre. Challenges for this were building an Ark, animal costumes and, oh yes, we had no rostrum, so acting took place on the floor with the audience sitting on the same level!

/CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA

A grand spectacle. We had to agree to produce this 18 months prior to performance dates, so that Alan Charlton's art class could create all the really authentic-looking Egyptian headdresses, jewelled neckwear, breastplates, etc.

/SUMMER OF THE 17TH DOLL

This play required a lot of Kewpie dolls, made for us by John Davis's mother, Bertha. We held a raffle every night and the prize was a doll, but the winners had to wait until the end of the season to uplift their prizes. I drove all over town delivering them. As recently as a couple of years ago, there was one in the window of a small cottage in Station Road, Kamo!

/THE MOUSETRAP

We managed to secure the rights to be the first theatre in New Zealand to stage Agatha Christie's world record-breaking play in its 59th year.

/FEMALE TRANSPORT

A play about convict ships leaving the UK and going to Australia. Barry directed this and managed to get a copy of a soundtrack of creaking timbers etc from Kelly Tarlton's ship in Paihia. The entire theatre was converted to become the bowels of the ship and the patrons were 'locked in' as well as the prisoners! The one big challenge was staging someone placing a noose around her neck and jumping from a tall stool. We had many safety measures in place, but it was still scary to witness every time.

Productions that really stand out for me:

/TURENGES DON'T MAKE IT RIGHT

A locally-written spoof about the 1985 Rainbow Warrior affair. The characters were all played by men. Boy! What a challenge I had as wardrobe mistress, making dresses and finding shoes for them all.

/THEY DON'T GROW ON TREES

A comedy in which I played nine different roles, having to leave the stage on one side and re-enter very quickly on the other, dressed as someone else. A great challenge!

/THE BOOK CLUB

A one-woman performance of Roger Hall's fine play. During one matinée I cut the time of the first half down by five minutes, only to be told I had missed out two fairly important pages! No problem, I simply did them at the start of the second half. The audience were oblivious to the change in the script!

Ah, yes! The joys of 'live' theatre!

Our next production is a Musical Revue, from 23 November - 9 December.

"Let's go on with the show!" ■

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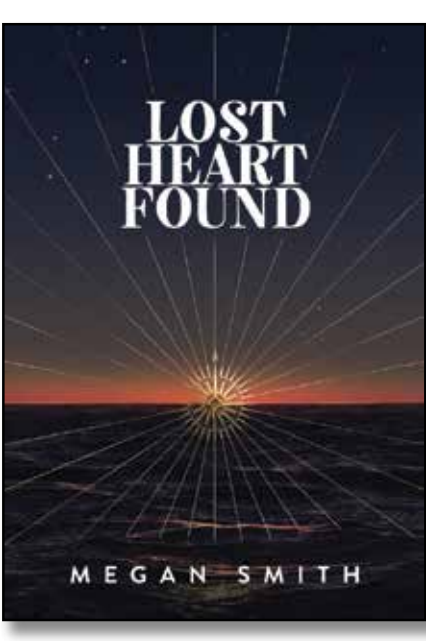
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WHANGAREI'S **MEGAN SMITH** HAS PUBLISHED A PERSONAL MEMOIR OF A YEAR SPENT EXPLORING THE WORLD WHILE COMING TO TERMS WITH LOSING HER DAD. THIS IS AN EXTRACT

The Trans-Siberian railway connects European Russia to the Far East.

If you were to complete the journey from Moscow to Vladivostok without getting off, it would take you seven days. A lot of tourists who complete this journey do so from West to East, starting in Moscow and ending in either Vladivostok, or Beijing if they choose to include the Trans-Mongolian.

Mark really wanted to cross Russia from one side to the other, so we opted for the traditional Trans-Siberian journey, but in reverse. We started in Vladivostok, and each day got 'closer to civilisation', to use my Russian friend Rom's words.

I did a lot of research before booking our tickets. Russian trains are separated into three classes. A first-class cabin includes berths for two people and a bathroom that is shared with another first-class cabin. Each second-class cabin has berths for four people, with a toilet at either end of the carriage. There is also a shower you can use if you book it and pay a fee to the *provodnitsa*. In the third class, the carriages are not separated into cabins. Instead, they are open plan in order to squeeze in as many bunk beds as will fit. On the advice of some of my Russian friends, I quickly ruled out travelling third class, though I did spend a lot of time choosing between first and second.

The bathroom was an attractive amenity, as was the privacy, but it was twice the price of second class, which I struggled to justify so early on in our world trip.

When April, my best friend from school, let me know that she had been given last-minute approval from her boss to take time off and come and meet us in Irkutsk, the decision was made a bit easier. We would brave second-class. Mark and I would have three straight days on the train from Vladivostok to Irkutsk sharing with two strangers; then once we met up with April, we would claim three of four beds in our cabin, so at least we'd have a majority. I really like my personal space, so I was very aware that I had possibly just signed up for three straight days of feeling at best uncomfortable, and at worst unsafe.

It was just before evening when we boarded the train in Vladivostok and found our cabin. We both had lower berths that lifted up so that you could stow your gear in the compartments underneath.

At first we each used the storage compartment under our respective beds, but as soon as our cabin mates joined us we realised we hadn't left any room for their things. Awkwardly in the confined space, we moved our stuff to one side so they could use the other. They were both young men who looked like teenagers. I instinctively went to smile at them but stopped myself, again remembering Rom's sage local advice not to smile at strangers. In most parts of the world that's the way to make friends, but he assured me that in Russia the only people who smile at strangers are crazy. We made eye contact briefly, and when they glanced away, I discreetly observed that one

was leaner and the other more stocky.

They both wore big coats and surly expressions. I was reminded immediately of Russian villains from James Bond films. What had we gotten ourselves into? Just as I had despaired that we would be spending the next three days in uncomfortable silence, the stocky one timidly said: "Hi". Mark and I both smiled at him, replied, and realised that, like our knowledge of Russian, he probably only knew a few words of English. He quickly pulled out his phone, spoke a few fast words of Russian into the microphone, and handed it to me. In English on the screen, he asked what our names were. Mark reached for his own phone, and for the next three hours we conversed like that, passing our phones back and forth using Google Translate to speak each other's languages. A few times the translation was obviously not what the person meant to say, but we'd share an amused look and try again.



We found out that they weren't as young as they looked and were on a work trip to Khabarovsk, a city 12 hours by train from Vladivostok. We'd only be sharing the cabin overnight, and then they'd be departing early the next morning. We chatted about our families over dinner that night, a simple chicken stew provided as part of our tickets. The guys thoughtfully offered to leave the cabin when I wanted to get ready for bed and asked several times if they could help us with anything. When our new friends got off the train the next morning, my impression of them could not have been more different than when we'd first seen them 12 hours earlier.

Once they'd disembarked, Alexi, our *provodnik*, came around and replaced the linens on both top berths. It looked like we weren't going to be alone for long. Sure enough, we were soon joined by two men travelling on their own. One, whom we later found out was called Alexander (a good Russian name), climbed up onto the top bunk and didn't move for the next 12 hours. The other, Vladimir (an even better Russian name), spent that time either smoking in between carriages or lying on his bed in silence.

Having the lower berths was certainly an advantage. We could sit at the table and watch the view change constantly, from Russian concrete cities to evergreen cedar forest to remote wooden villages. ■

IMAGES: Megan Smith
This page, from top left: Kiwi pie shop in Siberia!; book front cover; railway platform; the Church on the Blood in Ekaterinburg.

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LONDON CALLING

MEGAN SMITH NOW WORKS FOR GOOGLE IN LONDON

Earlier this year I fulfilled a lifelong dream to write and publish a book, *Lost Heart Found* (see previous page – Ed). Ever since then I’ve struggled to get comfortable with the title of ‘author’.

While I’d love nothing more than to go on to publish many books, after that debut a part of me seriously wondered if I had any more words left to share.

Lost Heart Found shared the details of the best and worst experiences of my life so far, being intentionally honest as I wrote about coming to terms with the loss of my father, Trevor Walsh.

During the writing process I didn’t give much thought to how vulnerable I would feel once people started reading it. I’m glad I didn’t ‘filter’ my experience, but laying so much of myself out for everyone to see left me unsure what story I could tell next.

For the first time in five years, I spent a summer – last summer – at home.

Mark and I had seen some incredible places in the 22 countries we’d visited in our year off work, but as I returned to my favourite secluded Northland beaches and hiked familiar mountain tracks, it became obvious that our little corner of the world is up there with the best.

IMAGES
This page, from top left: Megan Smith; view of the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich from across the River Thames; London’s cityscape; St Paul’s Cathedral.

I had always thought I’d be coming home to Northland at some point, and started to wonder if that time had come.

Just as I was getting used to the idea of staying, though, a job offer with Google, in London, presented the chance to realise another long-held dream. Mark and I moved to London in early June.

When we first arrived there, Google put us up in accommodation in Cheapside, historically London’s marketplace and now its financial hub. On weekdays our casual attire distinguished us from the hordes of suit-clad bankers, who marched with purpose between very important meetings. On the weekend, though, it felt like we were the only people in the entire City of London.

We’d walk towards the river, past majestic St Paul’s Cathedral, over the Millennium Bridge and along Southbank towards the London Eye.

Crossing Westminster Bridge, we’d pause in the middle to admire the impressive golden palace that is home to the UK’s Houses of Parliament.

Big Ben is under wraps for restoration until 2021, but there were countless other buildings for us to admire on our return journey along the River Thames. I had to keep reminding myself that I wasn’t just visiting, I was *living* in London.

Six weeks or so into this new London life, I was more than a little bit in love with my new home. It might have been the heady mix of a few too many gin and tonics, combined with an unprecedented number of sunny days. England’s progression to the semi-finals of FIFA World Cup had the city buzzing with expectation and cries of “It’s coming home!”.

The lonely anonymity of this vast city dissipated as strangers dared to

share a cheeky grin and a hesitant hope that this year could be ‘our’ year.

London is often described as a lonely place, but like the weather and the football results, my experience has far exceeded expectations. I hadn’t had a moment to be lonely since arriving.

Since Mark and I had spent a year on the road with only each other to call home, we’d become quite good at keeping each other company. On top of that we’d been embraced by old and new friends, colleagues, friends of friends and former colleagues, who helped us find our feet in our new city.

Settled in a little flat in West Hampstead, inspiration struck and I started to write again. Perhaps my next body of work will be a love letter to my new home – London. ■

More: www.lostheartfound.com



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/TROPIC OF WHANGAREI

DAVID MUIR RECKONS THE DINNER PLATE FIG TREE HAS GOT THE BIGGEST WOW FACTOR

The greatest thing about gardening in the North is that the climate and soils allow us to cultivate a range of ornamental plants that gardeners further south (generally speaking) can only dream about. I'm talking about sub-tropical plants. Forget about the Tropic of Capricorn, we live in the Tropic of Whangarei!

The Dinner Plate Fig tree is about as far away as you can get from subtle – on first seeing one, it assails your eyeballs and sears your memory with outrageous leaf size, form and texture.

If the late Os Blumhardt (1931-2004) wasn't the first to bring this plant to New Zealand, he was certainly among the pioneers. He collected live seed in Papua New Guinea in 1986, successfully germinated it at his Koromiko Nursery

at Maungatapere, and subsequently sold off most of the plants at \$100 each. Since then all new plants have been propagated from cuttings, a notoriously difficult job with this species.

The obvious place to see this tree with its mega-leaves is in Whangarei Quarry Gardens – at last count there were nine specimens arranged along the length of the valley there. Take the family, go for an outing, and see for yourself. Look for the curious cricket ball-size syconiums amidst the giant leaves.

A syconium is not exactly a flower, nor is it a fruit. Rather, it's a botanical curiosity – an outside-in flower capsule, in which the tiny flowers are enclosed. In Papua New Guinea, there's a tiny wasp that bores into this capsule and pollinates the flowers. Because we don't have that species of wasp here in New Zealand, the pollination does not happen here, and the syconium does not develop into a fruit. Nor are there any seeds produced.

Those huge pleated leaves are up to 600mm wide and 900mm long. The pleats add strength and rigidity to the leaves – much like corrugations add the same to the thin roofing iron on our houses.

In its homeland, the Dinner Plate Fig does produce fruit – large enough that a secondary common name is Highland Breadfruit. In the local Tok Pisin language, the tree is known as Kapiak. The fruit is said to be barely edible, but the young leaves are sometimes eaten after being cooked.

Botanists don't seem to be able to agree on the right scientific name for this tree – it's either *Ficus dammaropsis*, or *Dammaropsis kingiana*. Let's leave that debate to them.

How do you buy one of these exotic trees? Not easily, I admit. Generally, you'll need to search out one of the very few nurserymen who tackle the difficult task of propagating them, and then put your name on their waiting list.

Occasionally, and fleetingly, you might see them offered for sale in a retail garden centre – Redwoods at Kerikeri had five such plants for sale in early 2017, at \$100 each. More often than not, you need to be 'in the know' to get one into your garden. It's because they're hard to propagate, hard to find, and expensive, that they've become an icon of Northern sub-tropical gardening.

A word of caution: when visiting Whangarei Quarry Gardens, or any public garden, please don't pick any flowers, fruit or foliage. ■

IMAGES: David Muir

Top, from left to right: The leaf of *Ficus dammaropsis* is bigger than a dinner plate; the whole fig tree assails the senses; the syconium or 'outside-in' flower; new shoots are said to be edible.

Whangarei Quarry Gardens, 37A Russell Road, Whangarei. Open daily 9am-5pm.



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Nobody does it better

Grant Murray is the new owner of the LJ Hooker Whangarei real estate franchise



From left: Adrienne Battersby, Karen Griffiths, Shirley Hughes, Heather Thorburn, Grant Murray, Kerry Milne, Linda Budd, Joe den Enting.

WHEN I WAS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY recently to secure the LJ Hooker Whangarei franchise, there was no doubt in my mind that this would be a great move. It was a resounding "Yes!" right from the start. We are already operating from the firm's new office at 25 Rathbone Street in central Whangarei.

Acquiring a brand that has had over 25 years of success selling property in Whangarei is a recipe for further success. In the wider Whangarei district LJ Hooker has been associated with selling thousands of houses, sections, commercial buildings, lifestyle blocks, coastal property, farms, run-offs, commercial leases and more.

The reputation of LJ Hooker throughout Australasia has been built on great customer service delivering excellent results, underpinned and driven by the famous motto: "Nobody does it better".

LJ Hooker New Zealand won the Canstar Blue "Most satisfied customers" award (Real Estate Agencies 2017). Local agent Heather Thorburn (residential and lifestyle property sales) was ranked No.1 in NZ (2017) by 'Customer Echo', a third-party customer satisfaction review company.

My own background with LJ Hooker goes back to 2006, when I was appointed manager of the previous Whangarei office, working continuously there for over 12 years, seven of those alongside the late Michael Springford, a local icon in the real estate industry and a wonderful mentor.

I have an extensive business, sales and marketing background, having owned and managed businesses in Wellington and prior to that in the Waikato – a wide variety of industries including property sales, new home design and builds, retail and trade hardware management and sales,

and interior decorating. For two years I owned and operated a Lollipops Children's Playland with café in central Wellington.

Our family moved to Whangarei in 2005 and is actively involved in the community; we have a special interest in the Hockey Turf and spend many hours there weekly.

Announcing the change of ownership here in early September, Keith Niederer, who is General Manager of LJ Hooker New Zealand, had this to say:

"LJ Hooker will continue to support the brand and provide service to its clients in the region and ensure the legacy that was built by Michael Springford continues under the helm of Grant and his team.

"Northland is a key region for us and strategically we want to ensure we cement our place as real estate market leaders.

"This is an exciting new phase for Grant up in Northland where we already have

some of the best Principals and agents in the country. As a group we're looking forward to even more people joining our close-knit network across New Zealand."

I'm proud to lead a local and loyal team dedicated to providing outstanding client service. We all know that when it comes to real estate, "nobody does it better". ■




More information

Ph: 09 283 9474

Address: 25 Rathbone Street, Whangarei

Email: grant.murray@ljhooker.co.nz

www.whangarei.ljhooker.co.nz



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Why four lanes from Marsden to Whangarei is vital

Whangarei MP **Dr Shane Reti** says a four-lane highway from Whangarei to Marsden is essential not only for our economy, but for our safety

RECENTLY, THERE WAS A GLIMMER OF

hope that the four-lanes from Whangarei to Marsden might be announced in the National Land Transport Programme. Unfortunately, when the programme was unveiled, the project was off the table and replaced by trams along Queen Street!

It is also disappointing to hear from the Minister of Transport that NZ First have not given their support for four-lanes. This shows me who is working for Northland, and who isn't.

Every stakeholder knows that the four-lanes from Marsden to Maunu will have a huge economic impact. What you might not know is that improvements to this stretch of road will also have a huge safety impact.

Over the past ten years, this section has seen **17 deaths, 35 serious injuries and 141 other injuries**. If we expand our scope you will find that **Oakleigh to Toetoe Rd** currently has a safety rating of 2 out of 5 stars and, furthermore, Toetoe to Maunu has the second worst fatal and serious accident rating between here and Puhoi. With an ever increasing daily traffic count along this stretch of road it is clear that four-lanes are not just required to ensure our economy, they are required to ensure our safety.

However, instead of \$500M invested in four-laning, Northland is being offered 410 fluorescent "sticks" in the middle of the road. These are called "safe-hit-posts" and NZTA tell me that 20 percent of them have become dislodged in the past three months at a replacement cost of \$15,000. The "safe-hit-posts" will save 1.76 lives over four years.

I am sure we all want to see roads that are safe to use. However, our intuition and the data shows four-lanes is where the real safety gains happen.



Unfortunately, from the announcement made recently, Northland misses out again and the worst road from here to Puhoi remains just that. Indeed, the last Prime Minister told me he had a vision of four-lanes all the way from Whangarei to Matamata – a vision worth holding on to.

You can be assured that myself, and Northland MP Matt King, join the Regional Council Chair, Regional Land Transport Chair, and all of Northland's Mayors, in the continued fight to bring back the four-lanes from Whangarei to Marsden.

I will keep lobbying the Government and I will keep working hard for you. If the matter of four-lanes matters to you, please continue to let your MP know and join the discussion on my Facebook page. ■

More information

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Email: shane.reti@parliament.govt.nz
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www.shanereti.co.nz

Magic Music FM 88.3 & 107.1

Yvonne Lilley is carrying on the broadcasting legacy of her late husband, Robyn, whose lifelong enthusiasm for radio continues with Kamo-based Magic Music FM, established by the Lilleys in 2004

THE LILLEY FAMILY HAVE LIVED IN AND

around Whangarei for more than 100 years, so it was only natural that when Robyn, who had a long history in radio broadcasting, returned home, he and I set up a low-power FM station catering to a neglected group of music lovers in our community.

Through the work we did visiting elderly people and our charitable work, we soon realised that there were numerous folk who wanted to listen to a local station, broadcasting a variety of music they wanted to hear, when they wanted to hear it.

So, on 6 October 2004, Magic Music FM was born and quickly became a popular source of radio entertainment for all age groups in Whangarei. With the emphasis on little talk, not a lot of advertising and LOTS of great music from a wide range of genres, it stands apart today from other stations in the region.

With two FM frequencies, 88.3 and 107.1, anyone in Whangarei city and surrounding

areas can listen to a diverse and somewhat unpredictable selection of memorable music. Check out the website and Internet streaming at magicmusicfm.co.nz.

People from all around the world tune in on smartphones, tablets, and computers to enjoy the music that the station broadcasts.

The station is well equipped with a production facility, a studio for 'live' shows, and computer automation ensuring a reliable output. Solar panels reduce the carbon footprint, and a microwave link to the top of Mt Parakiore, where the main

transmitter is situated, ensures a good listening range.

The facilities provide a pleasant environment for the people who maintain, direct, produce and broadcast live and pre-recorded shows. The technology available keeps the station right up there with others providing a similar service throughout New Zealand and overseas.

Sadly, Robyn passed away in April 2016. I have taken up the challenge of keeping the station alive as a tribute to a wonderful man with a great passion for music and

people, who lived his life caring for and entertaining others.

Our son, Arron, who has come home to Whangarei, is now taking some of the burden on his shoulders as a 'second generation' director, producer, radio voice and technician. Like the others involved with the station, he does this as a "spare time activity".

There is still a significant human input required to keep the station transmitting continuously, every day of the year, though technology allows many tasks to be performed remotely from a computer keyboard. We don't need to be in the studio all the time!

Community radio consumes money and time. Magic Music FM is no exception. Practical support is always welcome whether it be by dollar donations, resources, (not old records/tapes, though, thanks, technical expertise, commission-only sales, hosting a show, or being the confident "voice" in advertisements and station IDs. Or a mixture of these.

Want involvement in a great community radio station? Get in touch with us. ■

More information

Ph: 09 435 5581
Mob: 021 113 6141
Email: yvonne@magicmusicfm.co.nz
www.magicmusicfm.co.nz



Marsden Cove Marina gears up for a great summer

Brent Wilson tells **Steve Challis** that there has been plenty happening, with much more to come as summer looms large

THE FAINTEST HINT OF SPRING NEVER fails to send me in search of more evidence; where better to find it than at a seaside village? So when a fine day presented itself recently, I treated myself to a day trip to Marsden Cove, to catch up on developments there.

It's been almost a year since I caught up with marina manager Brent Wilson, a time when his feet were barely hitting the ground as he prepared for the upcoming season.

Back then, he was especially focused on the marina's new vessel haul-out and boatyard facility, which had just started operating. I was keen to ask how his year had gone, and whether the pace now was any less frenetic. The question generates a few splutters and a hearty laugh.

"I think there was a day in July when I sat down in my office," Brent jokes, going on to explain that during the "down" season, or winter as we landlubbers know it, marinas need to complete major projects so as not to interfere with the busy "up" season.

"Certainly, getting the vessel haul-out and boatyard up and running once construction finished in October has been front and centre for us. The inaugural lift was a very exciting day and we have been delighted ever since with the performance of the Roodberg hydraulic trailer."

So much so, that the marina has invested in another Roodberg trailer, to focus on smaller pleasure craft.

"The 80 tonner is excellent for lifting the large vessels (up to 35 metres length and 12 metres beam), but obviously, being a marina, we cater for a lot of pleasure boats. The new trailer is ideal for vessels up to 12 metres length and with a narrower beam.

"We went for another Roodberg because it's simply beautiful machinery – incredibly stable, with ultra-safe displacement that allows great distribution of the vessel's weight."

The new trailer is expected to arrive in December, and Brent hints observant boaties should have their eyes open for promotional offers around that time.

TOP: Spectacular! Marsden Cove Marina.

BOTTOM: Painting sheds (below) complement the marina's extensive boatyard facility (right).



Photo: Full Moon Photography

Success on the trailer has naturally translated into success on the boatyard.

"We're achieving good custom and we've made a number of improvements to increase the levels of service on offer," he says, noting the installation of electronic gates allowing 24/7 access for customers, and an increasing number of marine service providers available on-site.

In addition to a resident painter and boatbuilder, the facility also offers a telehandler for hire, and live-aboard facilities including kitchen, lounge, showers and toilet.

And just down the road there are further new developments, with some still under construction. At the corner of the public boatyard road and Marsden Bay Drive, premises are being constructed for Multi-Hull Solutions, Asia Pacific's premier offshore and cruising multihull specialist, which will offer sales and services.

Tucked behind Multi-Hull Solutions, the marina's new trailer boat parking facility is taking shape, a safe and permanent 'home away from home' for up to 60 trailer boats.

Brent says the trailer park will meet demand for boaties who lack space to store their boats at home, or those who simply prefer the ease of leaving their boats near the water, avoiding long commutes with the trailer.

"The facility will have secure fencing, CCTV monitoring, night lighting and 24/7 access via remote controlled electronic gates. A wash-down facility means you can



Photo: Full Moon Photography

... with the trailer park opening in November, Brent is accepting registrations now

clean your boat and flush outboards, too."

With the trailer park opening in November, Brent is accepting registrations now. 'Earlybirds' who sign up for a year before the end of October will receive their first four weeks free, a value of \$200 (including GST). "Stick that in the middle of your article to see who actually reads it," he suggests helpfully.

Nice one, Brent – except it's nearly the end! This prompts him to quickly rattle off a list of other improvements achieved during the year: an all-weather outdoor dining area at the cafe and fishing club, a rental car service, and a self-storage container facility.

As always, the summer calendar is packed with events, with the regular Hook and Spear open tournament in November, Beach & Boat fishing competition in mid-February, Marsden Cove Marlin Classic in

March, rounding off in April with Off Shore power boat racing and the 'Chics @ The Chicks' ladies fishing competition.

Before all this fun on the water comes the return of a Seafood Festival at Marsden Cove, on 10 November. If that doesn't give you a taste of summer, nothing will! ■



More information

MARSDEN COVE MARINA
48 Rauiri Drive, Ruakaka
Ph: 09 432 7740
Email: info@marsdencovemarina.co.nz
www.marsdencovemarina.co.nz



Photo: Dean Whitehead

ā ē ī ō ū
Ā Ē Ī Ō Ū

When there is a macron (–) above a vowel, the sound becomes longer.

EDITOR **STEVE CHALLIS** SAYS
BE AWARE, BE VERY AWARE.
THE MACRONS ARE COMING!

The eagle eyes of Mister Ed have noticed something very curious going on in national media, notably the 'flagship' operations NZ Herald and TVNZ. The national magazine North & South and website Stuff.co.nz are on to it. It's not necessarily sinister, or even wicked, and in fact may be a good thing in the end. I daresay it is well-intentioned, and I don't know or care who started it, or how, or why. But I'd better just confront this thing and shout it out: **THE MACRONS ARE COMING.**

You've seen a macron countless times, though you may not know it by the name 'macron'. It's that straight line above a vowel or two in the spelling of lots of Māori words – often appearing in words like Māori, Taupō and (maybe) Whangarei.

The macron has an important job. It tells you that when you say the word, that vowel sound is held for twice the normal length – it's just like putting that vowel there twice (say: Maa/o/ri).

So far so good – because we all want to spell and pronounce words correctly, don't we? We want to show respect for te reo (Māori language) all the time, not just in Māori Language Week, (te wiki o te reo Māori), don't we?

On the TVNZ weather map the macron now appears in place names, including our own little part of paradise. It looks like this: WHANGĀREI.

And this where it starts to get messy. The straight line (macron) is over the second A, and only the second A. We are being told that the correct way to say the name is: fa-NGAH-reh. Emphasis is on the second syllable. If the macron was over both 'A's it would be said: FAH-NGA-reh. No macron, no extra emphasis. Got it?

But wait. It gets messier, much messier.

The weather presenter on the day I was watching (Matt McLean) pronounced our fair city as: FAH-nga-reh. With or without intent, he ignored the macron.

At this point you may well be asking: What's your point, Mr Ed?

The point is: *If you're going to use macrons, for all the right reasons, you have to pronounce the words accordingly – or else just don't bother with them.*

How to pronounce a Māori word correctly depends on its meaning – and that's where things get exceptionally messy.

Establishing the true meaning of many Māori words is fraught with danger, because nearly all their early history has only been told, not written – passed down from generation to generation.

Let's take 'Whangarei' as an example. What is the origin of the name?

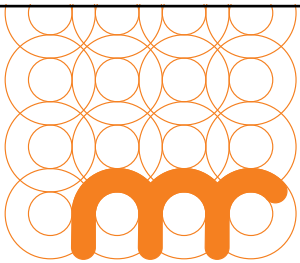
Te Ara: The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand (www.teara.govt.nz) gives four versions, then helpfully tells us that it is now pronounced with two long vowels!

Whangarei District Council's new logo acknowledges two "stories of place" that "inspired the design". The first is the legend of two sisters, Reipae and Reitū, fighting over a young chieftain. In brief, Whangarei means 'waiting place (whanga) of Rei'.

The second story is the place was once also known as Whangārei-te-terenga-paraōa, meaning 'gathering place of the whales' (paraōa = 'large fish, whale'). (Note: Rae Roadley contributed an article in Scene in November 2016 that includes detailed explanations of all this: Go to: scenemagazine.co.nz/issue-101-nov2016)

So how are we supposed to pronounce our place? How many macrons does the 'Whangarei' have? None? One? Two?

I'd be delighted if someone could supply a definitive answer. But there isn't one. It all depends on what/who you choose to believe and how much you care. This 'straight line' mark of respect called a macron is a can of worms (kutukutu). ■



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From left: Karen Griffiths, Linda Budd, Heather Thorburn, Grant Murray, Kerry Milne, Shirley Hughes, Adrienne Battersby, Joe den Enting.



“Thank you Mr Hooker. And Mr Murray.”

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New owner and managing director Grant Murray invites you to visit the team in our new office at 25 Rathbone Street, and experience for yourself why “nobody does it better”.



Whangarei

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