

MERCURY BAY CO-OPERATING PARISH

St Andrew's By the Sea Community Church

Newsletter August/September 2018

*Our mission in this parish is to share
the love of God with all people*

Our people and their stories... Robyn & John's Italian Odyssey



John and Robin have recently returned from an extended tour of Italy, in search of the places where Robin's father was taken as a Prisoner of War. In a Sunday morning service, John told us a little of their adventures, with the theme 'entertaining angels unawares'. While listening to him, we realised this had

been an emotional excursion, and one that brought them new insights about God's peace. Here's a bit more of their story:

Stanley Butson (Robin's father) was 24 when he was sent to North Africa with the NZ Expeditionary Force. He and thousands of others were taken prisoner in 1941 and put on board the ship 'Jantzen' for transportation to Italy. Off the Greek Peloponnese the ship was torpedoed by the British, and 500 men died in the ship or in the sea. Stan was among the survivors.

Robin's father spoke very little about his war years, so Robin contacted the NZ Army about her father's medals. "The Army people were so helpful, they gave us a lot of information," Robin says. "This set John on a Google search and eventually we decided to visit Italy."

The story continues:

The surviving men continued on to Italy. Over the next couple of years Stan moved to four different camps on the Italian east coast. Robin and John started at Bari, looking for camp PG65. A man named Domenico (one of John's 'angels') took them under his wing and led them to an overgrown field, with tall gate posts standing in ruins. Walking between them, Robin and John were very moved to think of Stan, and all the prisoners who had gone through those gates, probably in fear.

Robin took a photo of poppies in bloom. They saw a number of watch towers in the distance, very old buildings from another age. They walked through the ruins of the barracks, and saw writing on the walls. "In one place the Spirit filled me with peace, and I knew my father had been in that barracks." John and Robin had brought communion cups from Israel, made of Olive-wood, and they shared communion there, and in every camp they visited. "We asked Dominico to take communion with us, and he did. In each camp, we prayed for the Spirit to release forgiveness for all the wrongs of war, we blessed the land and gave thanks for all those who risked their lives to help the soldiers."

Further up the coast they went to Brindisi, looking for Tutturana Camp. Most people had no idea about a POW camp, but another 'angel', an old man named Biaggio, became very animated when he heard their enquiry. "He bundled us into his old car, jabbering away in Italian, and we drove for miles." This camp too, was obliterated by weeds, and so ruined they could not go in. "The old man seemed very sad that no-one was remembering the war history. God sent that old man to us, and on the way home he stopped to tell all his friends about the 'Inglesis' he was chauffeuring around."

The next stop, Camp PG 57 at Cividale, had the reputation of being the most notorious in all Italy, under the command of a Commandant who later stood trial for war crimes. But for John and Robin it left an impression of peace. They stayed in nearby Udine, with Maryanne, whom they had contacted from NZ, and so were able to converse easily. There was a ruined chapel at the camp, which the Aussie and NZ prisoners were allowed to rebuild.

"It is a most beautiful chapel," Robin says. "The men who built it erected a crucifix in the worship centre and wrote their names on the back of it." One was Ambrose Laughlan, whose experience led him to become a Catholic Priest when he returned to NZ. "There is an old barn on that site, where the Italian officers and the local community were allowed to watch movies. The whole place felt blessed."

In Padua, near Vienna, John and Robin sought Camp PG 120/8. Here their 'angel' turned out to be a woman driving a taxi. She knew the

area, and took them to the cemetery where her own family were buried, but she had no information about the camp. However thanks to John's research they were able to find the location, and a converted building which appeared to be part of the old camp. Other on-line researchers agreed this was it, but they could find no-one to ask. Here too, John and Robin shared communion and blessed the land.



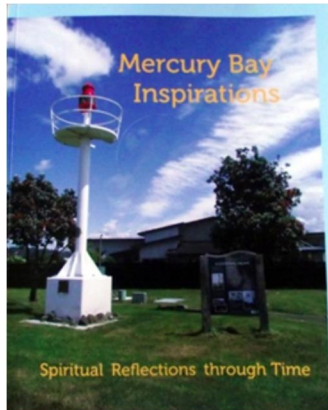
On board a bus, Robin had a vision – “A young man in 1940's clothing said to me, ‘this is the end of the journey’. It felt very peaceful.”

Robin's father's journey didn't end there. In 1943 Stan and several others escaped from Camp 120/8, when a Catholic priest took them through the village to Mass. The priest told them to disappear down the street, and they would not be missed until roll-call that night. For eight months they made their way towards Rome, hiding and sleeping where they could. Robin only hears snippets of Stan's journey to freedom. “They hid in the mountains, and sometimes sympathisers took them in and fed them. One man died in the snow, and they carried him for three days until they found somewhere to bury him. Another time, Stan had to remain motionless under a bush when a soldier on patrol lit a cigarette and stayed there until his smoke was finished.” Stan eventually arrived in Rome, and from there was taken to England before returning to New Zealand to marry Robin's mother. “Mother told me not to ask about the war, as it would upset Dad, but I sometimes heard him talking to his RSA mates. That's when the stories came out. I feel that I understand my dad a lot better now that I've seen these places.”

Robin and John now feel blessed to have been able to trace Stan's steps through Italy. “I think the main thing it brought home to me, is that whatever the sin, the hatred, the bitterness, God's forgiveness has gone before us. The work of love, the redemption, is already done – if only we will accept it. Christ has wiped the slate clean. He can heal all the hurt of the world if only people will let Him. That's what we are here to do. To tell the truths of God's Love to all people.”

Mercury Bay Inspirations - an act of faith!

You may remember that Julie and Dorothy put together a book as a gift for Rev Mary Petersen when she left the parish a couple of years ago. That encouraged us to publish another to raise funds for the Church. We started off with scenic photos around the Bay (not hard to find!) and thought we would couple them with appropriate Psalms, but instead of Psalms, the words of hymns kept popping into our heads. Then the photos transmuted into ones that matched the hymns. Most are old hymns are out of copyright. There are a couple of exceptions – New Zealand hymn writer Professor Colin Gibson kindly gave us permission to use two of our Church favourites, *'Where the road runs out and the signposts end'* (very appropriate for Whitianga!) and *'Nothing is lost in the sight of God'*.



Eventually we had to pluck up courage to press the 'publish' button, then wait, hope and pray that the book would be 'saleable'. Jenny Christensen was present when we opened the box, and pronounced "I'll buy one!"

The hymns might revive memories for the older generation – we don't sing them much these days - but we hope the book will inspire young and old to *find the Spirit of God* in their own surroundings, and to give thanks and praise in all of life.

At the Book launch and History Tea last week, 40 people were treated to lace tablecloths and bone china, and John Jackman telling us about his early life in the Bay. Initial book sales are encouraging. Copies are \$23 each (\$20 plus GST). The book is available from church, or you can order online from standrewswhitianga@gmail.com

If you would like to know more, ring Dorothy 07 869 5452.

**Parish Bank Account for all church donations is:
Mercury Bay Cooperating Parish
BNZ Whitianga 020 496 0062562 00**

The whole of life is a journey

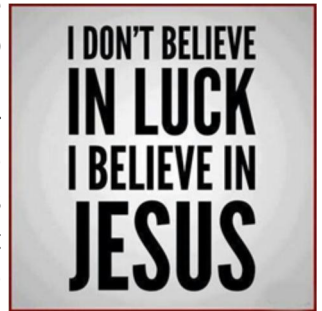
Barbara Blake submitted this item (– author unknown).

We are born on the train of life as our parents continue on their own journey. From that day we travel with them and we believe they will always travel by our side. As time goes by, other people board the train, some very significant ones – siblings, friends, and perhaps the love of our life. Others who travel with us will also influence our lives, for better or worse.

At some station along the way each of our parents will step down from the train, leaving us to journey on without them. Others whom we love will step down too, each leaving a vacuum in our lives. Some travellers will go so unnoticed that we never realise they left.

This train ride will be full of joy and sorrow, expectation and regret, fantasy and reality, hellos and goodbyes. We are here to enjoy the journey. To do that, we must make the most of it, take a genuine interest in our fellow travellers, be the best that we can be for them.

The great mystery for everyone is: When or where will we ourselves step down? The only way to prepare for that day is to live every day to the full, to leave behind all the hurts and wrongs, real or perceived, to accept forgiveness, to love and forgive in full measure, to develop and use all the talents we have and be the best that we can be, so that when the time comes for us to leave our seat, we will leave only beautiful memories for those who continue to travel.



Jesus said, "I came that you might have life in all its abundance....."

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One person who lives her life to the full, is Diana Campbell-Barnaby. Recently Diana celebrated her 80th Birthday. After a weekend of generous community parties, Diana gave her birthday money to her favourite cause, the Mercury Bay Day Camp. The total gifted was \$520. Thank you Diana, and God bless you.

Vision Day - July 7th

Our annual Vision Day was led by our Resource Minister, Rev Jan Fogg, who led us through the day in Bible study, discussion, thinking time and brainstorming. We began with Moses and the burning bush, reflecting on Moses' lack of confidence, and God's promises to support him with competent helpers. 'Delegate' became a key word for the day, reiterated in the story of Mary and Martha, where Mary sat at Jesus' feet and *listened*, while Martha missed out because she was 'too busy'.

We are a small, but very lively fellowship at St Andrew's, encouraging one another and always praying that the Spirit will draw others to work and worship with us. In looking to the future, we agreed that *friendship* is the place to start, taking a genuine interest and offering a listening ear, practical help and hospitality. We recognised the importance of social media, to inform the wider community of everything that goes on at St Andrew's. Julie keeps the website up, but she would like more people to be posting their news.

Volunteers are always needed!

The Church Op Shop supports all the churches in Whitianga, as well as many other local charities (15 at the last count).

We are always on the lookout for community-minded people who are willing to help, sometimes in the workroom, sometimes on the counter. If you would like to help, please ring Madeleine 866 0169.

Community Christmas Dinner

Are you willing to help with table service in the Town Hall on Christmas Day? Or make the tea? Or transport people? We need lots of volunteers. If you can help, please ring Maureen Kerr 027 246 6164.

Bank account for Community Christmas Dinner and for Community Meals (Monday Meals) is:

Mercury Bay Community Support Trust

Westpac Whitianga 03 1578 0108901 00 (please identify which project)

Worship @ St Andrew's - Sunday ***9:30am***

Everyone is welcome here!

***Our family space has quiet toys and Bible-based activities
for young children.***



Aug 5th - Communion - Peter Chaffin

12th - Rev Shirley Barker-Kirby

19th - John Twemlow

26th - Alistair Rogers

29th - Wednesday - Ladies Bible Group lead worship at Continuing Care

Sept 2nd - Communion - Rev Jan Fogg

9th - Peter Chaffin

16th - Ross Millar

23rd - John Twemlow

30th - Dorothy Preece

And Combined Churches service, 5pm at St Peter's

Parish Register - Funerals

Our prayers are with all those who grieve

***June 9th - Sybil Jean Menzies, at St Andrew's, burial at Mercury
Bay Cemetery. Gordon Barnaby officiating.***

Our prayers are with the family



In Memoriam

We sadly record the recent passing of our old friend, Ken Fox, in Auckland. Ken served St Andrew's fellowship as Elder and worship leader for many years, and his wife Greta was our Op Shop manager. Our prayers are with Greta and the girls.

Parish and Community Activities

Newcomers are cordially invited to join any of these friendly groups

Service 9:30 every Sunday

AA DRIVER LICENSING - all day 2nd Friday of each month. See notice board for dates

CHURCH OP-SHOP opens Tuesday-Saturday 8:30-12:30, now with EFTPOS! Enquiries, ring Madeleine 866 0169

COMMUNITY MEALS served in the Church hall from 5-6pm every Monday. Meals phone (attended Mondays only): 021 0294 2234

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP All welcome. 2nd Wednesday of every month @1:30pm. For venue: Ann Harsant 866 4740

ENLIVEN (Presbyterian Social Services for seniors) every Thursday, by arrangement only. For more information, ring Jenny 866 0556

LADIES BIBLE STUDY Wednesday at 10am. Ring Julie for further details on 021 169 1637

SCRAP BAGS (Quilting) every Wednesday from 11am in the Hall.

STITCH N' CHAT every second Tuesday in the Hall. To join this friendly group, ring Julie 021 169 1637

UPRIGHT & ACTIVE Friendly exercise sessions for seniors, held in the Church hall

Mondays, 9:30am - exercise for more active seniors.

Tuesdays, 10am - exercise for the less active.

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