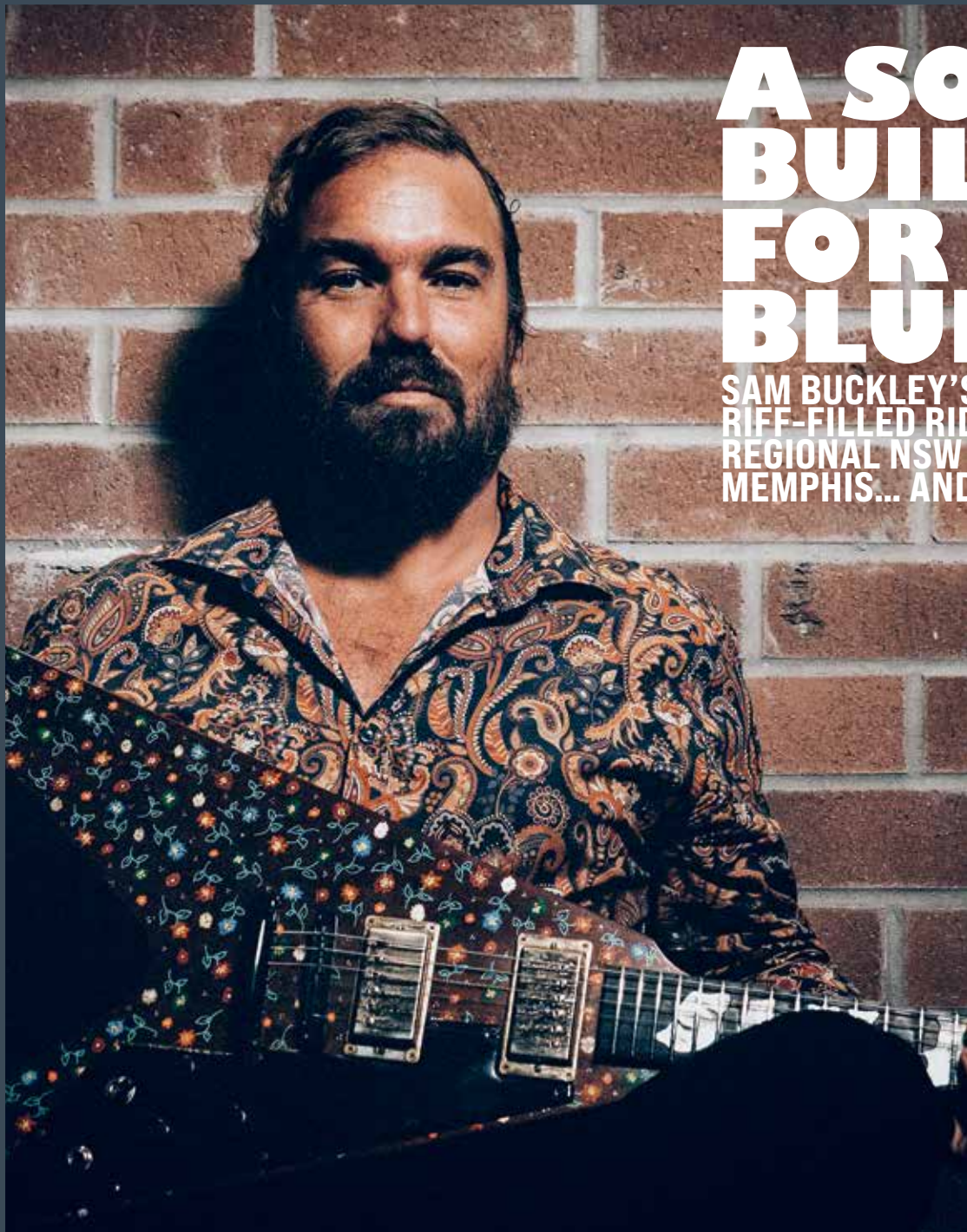


FOUND

REGIONAL



A SOUL BUILT FOR BLUES

SAM BUCKLEY'S
RIFF-FILLED RIDE FROM
REGIONAL NSW TO
MEMPHIS... AND BACK.

ISSN 2653-5696



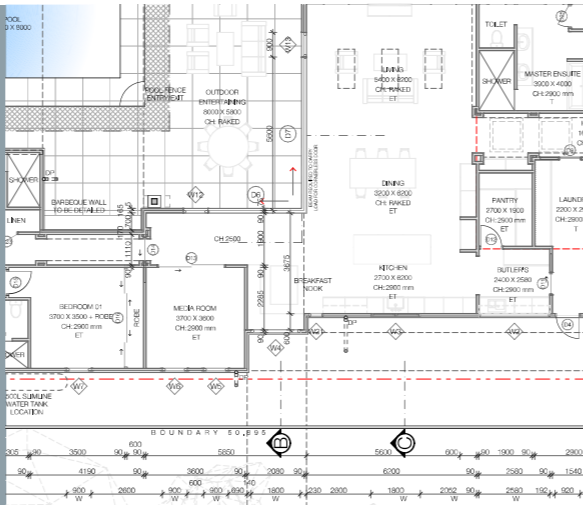
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TALES FROM THE BAR
NEW ENGLAND BREWING CO

MY DIGS
GILAY ESTATE

TIME OF YOUR LIFE
KATY DEE, SHIZTASTIC

TAMWORTH COUNTRY
MUSIC FESTIVAL 2023



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KATY DEE IS AN ARTIST AND PRINT DESIGNER BASED ON THE GLORIOUS MID NORTH COAST OF AUSTRALIA.

She creates original, fun, bold and playful artworks on a variety of mediums such as canvas, wood and paper, as well as creating digital illustrations.



FIZZ WHIZZ AND DOTTY SPOTTY FLOWER POWER

These two pieces, entitled Fizz Whizz and Dotty Spotty Flower Power, are examples of how Katy is inspired by colour, flowers and their plant pals on a daily basis.

Read Katy's story on pages 42-45.

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New England Brewing Co, Uralla

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SCAN ME



EDITOR'S LETTER

I know what it feels like to be walking down a path you don't feel is yours to tread. After studying journalism, I worked in advertising sales for four years because it was the best job available at the time, offering a salary that would keep a roof over my head in Sydney. When I finally secured a gig in editorial, my salary was cut in half and I was creating content around insurance and purebred dog breeding. But at least I was in the realm of my path... and here I am, 12 years later, smack bang on my path with *FOUND Regional*.

Following your dreams so often leads to good. That's not to say it's all rainbows and lollipops – it takes work, a little bit of fear-dodging and a whole lot of fire in your belly. And that stuff deserves to be celebrated. That's why we're chuffed to share the stories of fellow dream-chasers in issue two, including our extraordinarily talented cover feature, blues musician Sam Buckley. After years gigging with bands while also working as a labourer and music teacher, Sam finally leapt at his dream of becoming a front man. His solo album is due out early 2023 and it – is – magic.

Then there's Katherine Sherrie who, after a 12-year career in marketing and advertising, returned home to Tamworth to work alongside her parents in the family flour milling business. Today, she's one of the few females putting her own stamp on the male-dominated industry.

Then there's Lowanna Ruth who, while running Bellingen's Kombu Wholefoods alongside husband Kev, has teamed up with the local community in an effort to phase out single-use coffee cups from their village. The end goal? To reduce climate change and, ultimately, inspire the world.

I'm not one for new year's resolutions. But I am one for hard work, list making, sequin-covered jackets, surrounding yourself with like-minded humans and putting in the time to bring good stuff into the world. Dreams are worth chasing. Let's give it a crack as we plunge into 2023.

Steph x

STEPH WANLESS
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR



*
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
 OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, learn and work, the Anaiwan people, and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We extend our respect to the Yaegl people to the north and the Gumbaynggirr people to the south, and all the Aboriginal people of this beautiful land we're lucky enough to call home.



| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

OWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY |

LIZZY STAGEMAN

@lizzystageman_art

With thanks to Lizzy Stageman for sharing this stunning artwork entitled *Baayi*, meaning 'footprints' in Wiradjuri language. Lizzy is a contemporary Indigenous artist, born and raised on Wiradjuri land. She is entirely self-taught and is inspired by anyone who finds their place.

"This artwork is dedicated to both my grandfather and father, who were both drovers. I also invite you to pay respects to our ancestors whose footprints paved the way forward for us to be here on this beautiful land we call mother earth. In this series, I hope to take you on a journey through footsteps from my humble beginnings, to where I am today. The many dots throughout the painting represent the many footsteps I have taken, and my ancestors before me. You will also see travelling symbols throughout in groups of three. These circular symbols represent my journey of becoming a mum to my three beautiful children."

good news

Look for the good, the helpers, the folks who are here to make the world that little bit better.

Like the person who anonymously returned a copy of *Annie* to the Owasso Library in Oklahoma, even though it was 46 years overdue, and Monica Lennon, a member of Scottish Parliament who proposed the *Period Products Act* in August 2022 – leading to Scotland becoming the first country to make period products free for those who need them.

Look to Miss England, Melissa Raouf, who recently became the first contestant in the pageant's 94-year history to compete without makeup, and to the team of Australian scientists who named a newly-discovered species of crab – the fluffy crab – due to its sponge-covered body protecting it from predators.

Look to Joy Milne, a retired nurse who can smell Parkinson's disease with incredible accuracy and is now helping scientists to develop a test to diagnose it, and to veterinarian Dr Beth Bicknese who made a pair of orthopedic rubber shoes for a four-year-old African penguin called Lucas, who was suffering from bumblefoot.

Look to the incredible team of US-based doctors who saved the life of a one-year-old boy when he became the first recipient of both a heart and thymus transplant, and to the Tokyo Government for announcing its plans to require solar panels be installed on new buildings and homes by April 2025.

Look to Walcha-based artist and farmer Stephen King for becoming the third person to exhibit 20 times at Bondi's Sculpture by the Sea, the world's largest outdoor sculpture exhibition, and to Sir David Attenborough for sending a handwritten letter to a young fan, thanking her for naming her pet stick insect Sir David Stickenborough in his honour.

**That's a whole lot of good.
 Cheers to that.**

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BEHIND THE LENS

Toowoomba, Qld – travels countrywide

PIP WILLIAMS

"I took this self-portrait in February 2020, when my daughters and I were experiencing a period of home isolation during the early stages of the Covid pandemic. I'd started documenting moments of my girls in these slow (and quite boring) days – then decided to turn the camera on myself. I don't particularly like having my photo taken, especially by others. But making the time to sit down and intentionally photograph myself, to document a specific time in my life, find the right light and work out the bloody self-timer, I surprisingly found the process satisfying and enjoyable. In saying that though, I haven't taken another self-portrait since this photo."

@_pipwilliams
pipwilliamsphoto.com

LATEST PRODUCTS AND FOODIE FINDS

1. SAIJE CRAFT, BELLINGEN

A woman of many talents, Shanteya Lancaster of musical duo Saije also makes handcrafted, plastic-free jewellery using glass seed beads, secondhand silk fabric and the duo's own broken guitar strings. Her exquisite pieces are available for sale as merch at Saije performances, or online at:

[@saijecraft](http://saijemusic.com/saijecraft)

2. THE NEW BIRDS BOUTIQUE, WALCHA

If you're yet to discover Shelley Relf's spring/summer style reels – you're missing out. As owner of The New Birds Boutique in Walcha, Shelley's got her finger on the pulse when it comes to the latest fashion from quality brands like Kamare, Layer'd, Esmaeé, Kip&Co and the beautiful Fairley Jewellery. Your Christmas outfit just got sorted.

@thenewbirdsboutique

3. THE DAISY FIELDS, TAMWORTH

After a particularly traumatic birth with daughter Daisy, Brodie McGuffog wanted to bring some brightness into the world – so she started sewing. Today she makes a whole range of beautiful goodies for bubs, the perfect Chrissie gift for the little human in your life! Our pick? These adorable bubble rompers! Heads up – her processing time is two to three weeks, so get your order in stat.

[@thedaisyfields_](http://thedaisyfields.com)

4. GOODNESS & GRACIOUS, GUNNEDAH AND QUIRINDI

On the hunt for the perfect summer dress? A pair of shoes to match? A festive gift for a friend? A really good coffee? Goodness & Gracious is the go-to place for all of the above and then some. You can find their gorgeous boutiques in Gunnedah, Quirindi and online.

[@goodnessandgraciousstores](http://goodnessandgracious.online)

5. KALEIDOSCOPE, COFFS HARBOUR

A gift shop like no other, Kaleidoscope is a community initiative designed to engage and empower local artists, makers and designers. The one-of-a-kind retail setting provides a platform for locally made products and wares, giving them some well-earned time in the spotlight. Searching for a gift with soul? Search no more.

[@kaleidoscopecoffs](http://kaleidoscopeshop.com.au)

6. DIAVOLETTO WOOD FIRED PIZZA, BELLINGEN

The north bank of the river at Lavender's Bridge is the place to be in Bellingen on Tuesday and Sunday evenings. There are families on picnic rugs, kids on swings, live music and importantly, Diavolletto Wood Fired Pizza, a mobile wood fired pizza business run by Italian-born Salvatore Rossano. The vibe is laidback, but the authentic Italian-style pizza is the result of slow fermentation,

meticulous research on premium, organic ingredients, and a whole lot of passion, conveniently packed into a 'pizzeria' on wheels.

[@diavollettopizza](https://facebook.com/DiavollettoWoodFiredPizza)
0422 135 202

7. THE EZIDI PLACE, ARMIDALE

Three years ago, siblings Phill and Kate Mitchell approached the Ezidi community to offer employment and training in their family's motel restaurant, The Minnie Barn. This year, alongside CEO and Founder of Plate It Forward Shaun Christie-David, the trio have rebranded to The Ezidi Place – Armidale's first social enterprise kitchen and what is thought to be Australia's very first Ezidi restaurant. They're devoted to serving up opportunities to the local refugee community, as well as mouth-watering biryani, kibbeh and dolma.

[@theezidiplace](http://theezidiplace.com.au)

8. BAD MANNERS, TENTERFIELD

You had us at hot cinnamon donuts (gluten free!). And Nutella. And donuts covered in Nutella. And milkshakes. And Blackboard Coffee. And fries (also gluten free!). And Frosty Boy soft serve ice cream. And homemade apple pie. Okay forget it, we want ALL the things. Bad Manners invites you to enjoy all these glorious treats in their picture perfect outdoor courtyard. Open Thursday-Monday, 7.30am – 4pm.

@badmannersdonuts



9. MORTY'S JOINT, SAWTELL

This right here is your relaxed neighbourhood bar serving cold drinks, finger-licking food and damn good times. We're talking fried chicken and burgers washed down with craft beer, natural wine and cocktails. Rack 'em up thanks to the pool table (which operates on an honesty box system), and get ready for some banging live music sessions lined up for the summer ahead.

@mortys_joint

10. MATILDA'S, NAMBUCCA HEADS

Combine sunshine with arvo wines, fancy oysters and some seriously good pizza and you've just met Matilda's – the place to be in Nambucca this summer. ALSO – epic chef Kyah Lulham is back in the valley and is calling Matilda's home for eight weeks only. Adding creative bites, seafood, and his signature flare to the menu, the team are looking forward to bringing you more than decent pizza this season.

[@matildasnambucca](http://matildas.broads.com.au)

11. TANGO JUICE BAR, WOOLGOOLGA

Tango Juice Bar and Ice-Creamery, located in the heart of Woolgoolga, is slinging shakes, smoothies, fresh juices and sunshine vibes seven days a week, 8am-5pm. Their number one goal? To provide fresh, fun and healthy food to the local community. That includes buddha bowls, acai bowls and sushi bowls to boot!

[@tangojuicebar](http://tangojuicebar.wixsite.com/tangojuicebar)



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REGIONAL GIGS, PLAYS AND EVENTS

1. WALK OF LIGHT, GLEN INNES

Running now until Friday 13 January 2023.

After the sun goes down each night, enjoy a mesmerising installation of lights that promises to create an incredible atmosphere throughout the town of Glen Innes.

thewalkofflight.com
[@walkofflight_](https://www.instagram.com/walkofflight_)

2. CHRISTMAS IN THE MALL, ARMIDALE

Thursday 1 December 2022
 5pm – 9pm

Start your festive season at the top of the ranges in Australia's highest city. Santa and his Elves will transform Beardy Street Mall into a Christmas mecca, with market stalls, food vans, live entertainment, and kids' activities. Santa will also be bringing real life reindeer. Whoah.

visitarmidale.com.au/event/christmas-in-the-mall
[@visitarmidale](https://www.instagram.com/visitarmidale)

3. COFFS COAST CAROLS, COFFS HARBOUR

Saturday 17 December 2022
 6:30pm

Nothing says Christmas more than carols in the park! Coffs Coast Carols brings the whole community together to celebrate Christmas in true Coffs style – laidback and family-friendly.

Bring a picnic blanket and join in the fun. Enjoy a range of delicious food stalls and kids' activities, along with all your favourite carols.

This fun-filled evening will feature a fantastic line-up of performers local to the area. Santa will also pay a visit, and to top it all off, the show will finish with a bang thanks to the grand finale fireworks display.

coffscoast.com.au
[@coffscoastnsw](https://www.instagram.com/coffscoastnsw)

4. GRAFTON TWILIGHT FOOD AND FARMERS MARKET, GRAFTON

Every Thursday in December 2022.
 1pm – 7pm

Nothing says summer more than scouting out some local goodies at a food and farmers market, where you can connect with 35 plus regional farmers, growers, makers, and bakers. The Grafton Twilight Food and Farmers Markets are on every Thursday in December.

[facebook.com/GraftonFarmersMarkets](https://www.facebook.com/GraftonFarmersMarkets)
[@grafton_twilight_market](https://www.instagram.com/grafton_twilight_market)

5. GUYRA LAMB AND POTATO FESTIVAL, GUYRA

Wednesday 11 January – Monday 23 January 2023

Rediscover your love for quality produce at the Guyra Lamb and Potato festival, a unique New England experience that your tastebuds will thank you for. This festival showcases the very best local produce, boutique stalls, daily entertainment and activities.

visitarmidale.com.au/events
[@visitarmidale](https://www.instagram.com/visitarmidale)

6. TAMWORTH COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL, TAMWORTH

Friday 13 January – Sunday 22 January 2023

Call it what you want, The Nashville of Australia, The Home of Australian Country Music or to some folk, simply home; The Tamworth Country Music Festival is not one to be missed. Be ready for the streets to come alive with buskers and live music pumping out of venues all over the city as artists and fans flock to the town for eight days of music heaven from across Australia.

tcmf.com.au
[@tcmf_official](https://www.instagram.com/tcmf_official)

IN PICTURES

FORGING A REGIONAL LIFE

When Mike Terry first relocated to Armidale in the autumn of 2020, he emailed *FOUND Regional* owners Martin and Steph Wanless. We stalked his website, met for coffee and walked away with a myriad of creative projects on the horizon. Here, Mike shares his story of how he came to call the New England home.

WORDS As told to Steph Wanless
PHOTOGRAPHY Mike Terry

Photography has been the most constant thing in my life. For the most part, I let it lead and determine where I was and what I was doing. I started young. My older brother shot fashion and travel where we grew up in Europe and took it with him to the States. My parents and I followed when I was 13 and I got my first job at a newspaper at 16.

I realised quickly it wasn't about the photo for me, that printed end result. It was that I loved the situations it was getting me into. I wanted the experiences I was having, the people I was meeting, the worlds I got to dip into. I'm pretty curious. And nosy. So it serves those characteristics well.

After working in the US with regular assignments abroad, I got back to working in Germany. After seven years in Berlin, I met a woman from Uralla – what a cliché!

After charmed years in Europe together, just before the pandemic, we decided to relocate to Armidale for the proverbial go at finally growing up and starting a life. It was the first instance where my photography and career weren't leading my choice or decision – rather an unfamiliar leap, choosing love, partner, family.

I was nervous about starting over, I didn't know what life and my work was going to look like. After choosing photography for 25 years, it did me a solid and chose me right back. It's been my total companion – my excuse to meet people and dig into a place.

I'm grateful for the opportunities to do art and commercial work in the short time I've been here. It's made me feel unexpectedly close to the region and the people I've met so far. I don't want to say there is so much potential here, because it is already something very special. *





FIRST PAGE: Utah – Basement mirror with Mo on his first trip to the US to meet the family. THIS PAGE: Murcia, Spain – Priest walking through the back of the Cathedral; Sydney – Doorknock for fever check during Covid hotel quarantine; Armidale – Approaching the New England; Tokyo, Japan – Max Richter and ACME Ensemble perform at Sumida Triphony Hall. NEXT PAGE: Wollomombi – Mustering Merino for shearing; New England National Park – Looking onto the Great Dividing Range; Armidale – Erskine Street cactus; Laurieton – First time to the Pacific Ocean; Armidale – Australia Day celebrations.





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ODE TO EVE

Ode To Eve is an interior design studio led by Melissa Killen. She's inspired by beautiful objects, spaces and designs, both old and new, and fellow curators Simone Haag, Sarah Ellison and Sue Carr.

odetoeve.com.au
[@odetoeve](https://www.instagram.com/odetoeve)



AN ODE TO SLOW INTERIORS

WORDS Melissa Killen
PHOTOGRAPHY Studio LJ

I recently fell in love with an antique Victorian folding card table in Burr Walnut, circa 1860, that I acquired from Armidale's Blackbird Old Wares. It is absolutely beautiful. All of its intricacies along with its 'lived' flaws. How I would love to hear its stories; who crafted it, who owned it, what it has seen. This piece sits proudly as the entry table to our home. It lives on.

There is an established movement around the practice of slow living that innately includes the concept of 'slow interiors'. It is sympathetic to the acquisition of what already 'is'. Repurposing, which in some cases requires a level of restoration, can be as sustainably important as it is intriguing and rewarding. An ode to the past in a new, energetic existence.

Finding the moments to acknowledge what already 'is' and paying homage to it should be celebrated. Finding pleasure in mixing the old and the new should also be celebrated. There are beautiful new furnishings and decor available to us. In fact, we are inundated with options. It is in the longevity of our acquisitions where I believe their true value is reflected, regardless of whether a piece is brand new or vintage.

Some people have an incredibly strong sense of their design preference, applying their style to the interior furnishings and palette of colours, materials and finishes that represent this preference. For others, it is much harder to define. I believe our possessions, particularly the ones we have a binding connection with, are the true indicators of our style. Take these belongings away and the home transitions to being a house; a place where shelter and basic needs are met. I advocate a considered approach to mixing and matching styles, origins and ages as the making of a home; the place where a meaningful relationship with the owner emerges.

Curating spaces that are unique to those who inhabit them is an honour. It requires an understanding of the needs, desires and visions of my clients where respectful consideration and holistic transfer of each project is inherent to its relevance in their lives. It is unique. It is truthful. Embracing slow interiors is both a vibrant and vital part of this process.

Give yourself permission to celebrate your possessions proudly, interspersed throughout your home as exclamation marks of your true, personal style. *



A SOUND OF SAM'S OWN

From the pulpit to pubs, festivals to Memphis, Sam Buckley's journey to play the blues has been one soul-stirring, riff-filled ride.

WORDS Steph Wanless
PHOTOGRAPHY Jackson James

Sam Buckley heard rock and roll for the first time when he was 12 years old. The sounds swept over him, gritty and raw, pouring out of his dad's record player – something that was previously reserved for gospel music alone.

But not this day.

This was the day Santana's soul-stirring melodies, Eric Clapton's rule-breaking riffs and James Taylor's folk-rock chords came flooding into Sam's world, washing away the old to make room for something gutsy and new.

It was a baptism of rock.

"Up until that day, I'd lived a fairly isolated life – my parents were conservative Christians and steered me away from both radio and TV so my first musical experience was gospel," says Sam.

"My dad would walk around the house, playing guitar and singing – I wanted to be just like him. He taught me my first chords when I was 11 and we'd perform together at church. I guess you could say the pulpit was my first stage.

"But I could see, deep down, dad had this love for rock and roll. I think he'd put it aside for some time due to his faith. That all changed when I turned 12. He opened up and started bringing home great music like James Taylor's *Sweet Baby James*, Eric Clapton's *Cream* and Santana's *Caravanserai*." »



While Sam had started learning piano at the age of nine, he knew early on it was too stiff, too rigid. Listening to these albums cemented his feelings for a sound he couldn't quite put his finger on. It was soul-stirring, edgy and raw. A gospel influence rang through, but soaring above it all came wailing guitar solos and lyrics that lingered – it was music that meant something more, grounded by a rhythmic, walking bass.

“The sounds blew my mind, but I didn't know what it was called,” he says. “Then, one day, a family friend brought over a new album: Roy Buchanan's *When Guitar A Plays The Blues*. It was the first time I'd heard pure blues guitar, unadulterated and electric. That was the day my guitar hero went from Metallica's Kirk Hammett to Roy Buchanan.

“But no matter what sound I played, one thing dad taught me stuck – he told me the most important thing about music is to play with feeling. To this day, I always try to serve the song and convey a feeling people can relate to. That's when real connection happens.”

BLUES IN A BUBBLE

It was a connection born in relative isolation for Sam. The family lived on a 100-acre farm just outside of Bellingen, and he was homeschooled until the age of 15. The majority of their food was grown in a huge vegetable garden, which Sam would plough with his Clydesdale horse, and eggs were in steady supply thanks to their brood of chickens. Outside interaction consisted of trips to the Bellingen markets to sell strawberries, sun-kissed days on the shoreline learning to surf, and assisting his dad on plumbing jobs.

“It was a very earthy upbringing,” says Sam. “By the age of 14, I was doing three days a week as dad's labourer. I learnt the trade and spent a lot of time on building sites talking to people in their 40s and 50s. I could hold a conversation with any adult. But talking to people my own age was a different thing entirely.”

“THE SOUNDS BLEW MY MIND, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS CALLED. THEN ONE DAY, A FAMILY FRIEND BROUGHT OVER A NEW ALBUM: ROY BUCHANAN, WHEN A GUITAR PLAYS THE BLUES. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D HEARD PURE BLUES GUITAR, UNADULTERATED AND ELECTRIC. THAT WAS THE DAY MY GUITAR HERO WENT FROM METALLICA'S KIRK HAMMETT TO ROY BUCHANAN.”

When Sam went to school at 15, he says it felt like he was entering the real world for the first time. Before then, he existed in a bubble and, with little experience hanging out with people his own age, he was awkward and lacked social skills. So he joined the music program.

“That saved me,” he says. “Music helped me to connect, and before long, I became the guitarist for the year 10 band. By the time I reached year 12, I topped the class in music, but failed every other subject. At that point in my life all I wanted to do was play music and surf, I just needed to find a way to get there.”

The years following high school saw Sam lean into his farmhand and labouring experience. He tended fruit trees at an Indian commune, managed a chicken farm in Lochinvar and snapped up plumbing gigs across the state. But his days began and ended with guitar.

“I decided I wanted to be professional, so I'd spend hours practising every day and eventually ended up at Grafton TAFE, where I completed my Advanced Diploma of Music. I was 23 and had started playing in bands and doing gigs, but I knew to really progress, I needed to be in Sydney. Luckily I had a friend who was happy for me to sleep on his couch – so I packed up the car and drove straight there. I was ready to throw myself in the deep end.”

THE BIG TIME

City life was exhilarating for the self-described ‘small-town country boy’. Sam continued to support himself with plumbing work while studying at the International Conservatorium of Music, Parramatta, where he upgraded his Advanced Diploma of Music to a degree. At the same time, he dove into Sydney's music scene and, within three months, secured a guitarist gig with a band called Blue Venom. They hit the pub scene hard and mastered rock covers from the likes of Gary Moore, Santana and Cream.

But Sam's soul belonged to blues, so when he spotted an ad in Drum Media for a guitarist to Australian blues musician Anni Piper, he picked up the phone.

“Luckily, she liked my playing and my attitude – so I got the gig, and that was my first step out of the pub scene into festivals,” says Sam.

“We did a lot of touring and covered all the blues festivals around Australia. Back then, I played with a lot of fire and attitude, in the style of Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan. I was still labouring to make ends meet and also completed my Bachelor of Teaching at Avondale College – I was now a fully qualified music teacher but, on the professional scene, was mainly a gun for hire.

“I ended up releasing a blues rock album with Anni called Chasin' Tail. I wrote a lot of the songs, and we got some decent radio time – it even made it to Rage. But after four and half years together, I needed a change.” »

“MUSIC SAVED ME... IT HELPED ME TO CONNECT, AND BEFORE LONG, I BECAME THE GUITARIST FOR THE YEAR 10 BAND. BY YEAR 12 I TOPPED THE CLASS IN MUSIC, BUT FAILED EVERY OTHER SUBJECT.”





Six days after parting ways with Anni, John Durr from Black Market Music called Sam. Alongside renowned studio engineer Robert B Dillon, he was searching for a new guitarist for a band called Dreamboogie. They invited Sam to Melbourne to audition, spend the week with the other members, jam at local blues clubs and see if Sam would fit. Ultimately, he got the gig.

“That took me from Sydney to the forefront of the Melbourne blues scene – I got instant respect for making the cut, and while I still had to work my arse off musically, it saw me reach a whole other level,” says Sam.

“We did all the big festivals, the Blues on Broadbeach Music Festival, Bridgetown Blues Festival, the Fringe festivals – we were sought after and respected. We spent a lot of time in the recording studio and ended up doing three albums together, all while I was teaching music at different high schools across Melbourne.

“I learnt so much about music from those guys – we ended up experimenting with electronic loops and in time they became the centrepiece of the band’s rhythms – this gave a real driving intensity to the grooves the band played. I also learnt how to write intricate musical parts that always served the overall purpose of the song and my ears became much more attuned to the importance of the small nuances and details that make music more polished, slick and catchy. We were very structured, unique and refined, there was never any wasted space, and every piece of music had to say something relevant to the song.”

Dreamboogie’s best days arrived in 2016, when they won Victoria’s International Blues Challenge and were awarded an all-paid trip to Memphis, Tennessee – the home of the blues – to compete in the semi-finals. They strolled down Beale Street, played at BB King’s Blues Club, cruised down Highway 49 to Clarksdale in a 400 horsepower Dodge Challenger, visited Robert Johnson’s grave and played with the house band at Morgan Freeman’s blues club, Ground Zero. Sam soaked up every second of his time spent in the place so integral to the history of blues music.



But when it came time to compete in the semi-finals, Dreamboogie’s winning streak had run out – along with Sam’s desire to stay with the band.

“We tried to hang on a bit longer and entered the blues competition again in 2019 – we were favourites to win, but didn’t play our best and came runner-up instead,” he says. “From there, we all started going in different directions, we wanted different things.”

Sam knew what he wanted – to be a frontman. Then Covid hit.

BUCKLEY’S BLUES IS BORN

Sam and his partner Amelia were holidaying in Byron Bay when they heard the news. They quickly made their way back to their two-bedroom apartment in Melbourne and dove into the strange new world of teaching online. But where others might have seen five months straight of a stage five lockdown as a challenge, Sam saw opportunity.

He stole every spare moment to practise in the bedroom, developing his own sound and asking himself: ‘Who do I want to be?’, ‘Am I acoustic or electric?’, ‘How do I want to present myself?’ When he was ready, Sam set up a stage and Buckley’s Blues was born.

“I launched myself in the lounge room – that’s where I’d do live streams every week and people would jump on to listen to my sound,” says Sam.

“That’s when I really started working on my vocal beats and refining my style. I wanted to be something different, because finding small points of difference in art is how you set your own brand, give yourself a direction you can follow and express yourself in your own unique way.”

And Sam’s way is certainly unique. He creates all his sounds live, starting with a rhythm part on acoustic guitar. A pedal then enables him to switch over and get a bassline from his acoustic – laying that down with his acoustic rhythm. The combination of the two forms a locked-in, repeating loop.



“THESE GUYS ARE LIVING LEGENDS, THE ORIGINAL STAX RECORDS PLAYERS... THIS IS A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY, AND I’M SOAKING UP EVERY SOUL-INSPIRING SECOND OF IT.”

FOLLOW THAT SOUND

Sam Buckley will be the first person to tell you he’s lived life a little differently. Dreamboogie drummer, Rob Dillon, saw it in him too.

Dillon said, “You know what’s interesting about you Sam? You’ve grown up so differently that you don’t realise it’s strange to be on stage. Everyone else is scared of it because it’s an unusual environment for them – but for you it’s not. That’s the best thing about you.”

To see Sam at home on stage, stay up to date with his upcoming performances and for the release of his new album online, check out:

sambuckleymusic.com
[@sam_buckley_music](https://www.instagram.com/sam_buckley_music)

From there, Sam operates a kick snare pedal with his left foot and plays his electric guitar and sings over the top. It’s a raw, organic sound created wholly in that moment.

“That’s the crux of Buckley’s Blues,” he says. “I’ve done a lot of metronome work and refined the grooves. It’s very clean, sharp, precise and slick. It makes you move. And that’s the sound I’ll capture on my first album.”

After moving back home to his parents’ 100-acre property in late 2021, Sam’s been working on his inaugural album for the past year, with his now fiancée Amelia and their dog, Bear, by his side. It’s an artwork set in motion thanks to the support of Memphis blues royalty including: Lester Snell (arranger / piano / keys), Reverend Charles Hodges (organ), Willie Hall (drums / percussion), T.O. Crivens (rhythm guitar), Ray Griffin

(bass) and Lawrence ‘Boo’ Mitchell (Grammy award-winning studio engineer and owner of Royal Studios where the album is being recorded).

“These guys are living legends, the original Stax Records players, the greatest blues players in the world,” adds Sam. “I was so lucky to be introduced to Lester through a friend and I put myself out there and sent him two of my original songs. He wrote back and said he loved my sound and direction and before I knew it we’re working on a 10-song album together. The first track will be released late 2022, with the full album to follow in 2023.

“I have so much reverence for these players and what they’re doing for me. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I’m here for every soul-inspiring, blues-soaked second of it.” *

A NEW WAY TO MOVE

How one woman switched corporate life in Sydney for a Pilates studio in Armidale.

WORDS Steph Wanless
PHOTOGRAPHY Aleesha Phillips, Postscript Studio

Nicole Casson worked for the same, Sydney-based company for 10 years before moving to Armidale. She remembers long commutes, fast-paced days followed by late nights and having little to no time to spend with her partner Daniel.

Regardless, her passion for Pilates was unwavering and she attended one to two classes daily. It was her piece of calm, her happy place hidden amidst the chaos that can come with city living.

It was, and is to this day, her joy.

“I move my body for the sheer joy of it – and that’s not something I take for granted,” she says.

“I had a unique upbringing, my dad was in a wheelchair when I was growing up. Someone spear tackled him playing rugby one day and left him a quadriplegic – he never walked again. But he wasn’t bitter about the accident, he never complained or bad-mouthed the man who injured him. He still loved the game and always said he’d go back tomorrow if he could.”

Nicole’s dad lived the rest of his life unable to run, jump or hug – all seemingly small things we so often take for granted.

“His attitude taught me to be forever grateful that I can move my body and helps me to remember what a privilege that is. It’s this mindset I want to pass on to everyone who walks into my studio – I want you to feel empowered, confident and connected.”

SEIZING THE DAY

Nicole had been to Armidale once before moving here permanently. She attended the University of New England for an elective while studying psychology. The main thing she remembered? The cold.



“But it was more than cold – it was freezing,” she laughs.

“So when Daniel asked me to meet him one day to talk about the opportunity to move to Armidale for work, that memory was the only thing I had to go off. But to be fair, it was in the middle of winter so I shook that off pretty quickly and started Googling Pilates studios. There were some beautiful practices established, but none were quite in the style I had in mind – I immediately saw an opportunity to pursue my dream of opening my own studio.”

Nicole had already taken her personal passion for Pilates to a professional level in Sydney by undertaking her teacher training with Barre Body. That skillset combined with the reality of an unaffordable, fast-paced life in Sydney led her to jump at the opportunity to move to Armidale.

“We’d actually only been together three months when we made the decision – but the fact of the matter was the lifestyle there wasn’t sustainable for us. We were working in two different locations for the same company, so there was a lot of commuting in the opposite direction from each other daily. There was no way we could afford a property between our two workplaces, so if we’d stayed we probably wouldn’t see each other until 10pm most days. That’s not how we wanted to live our lives, so here we are.”

Nicole and Daniel moved to Armidale at the start of 2020. One month later, lockdown kicked in. While it certainly put a halt on them being able to meet people and connect to the community, it did grant Nicole the time to plan her studio. She began by leasing a space at Uralla’s Flow Shed, enabling her to kick-off with barre classes and get a sense for the region she was now so thrilled to call home. Once lockdown had lifted, it was time to upsize.



MOVE YOUR BODY

If you’d like to move your body for the sheer joy of it, you’ll find a variety of Njoy Pilates membership options online.

njoypilates.com/pricing
[@njoypilates](https://www.instagram.com/njoypilates)



“I’d been searching for a larger premises since December 2020 and came across this space. By April 2021 I was in and Njoy Pilates was born,” she says.

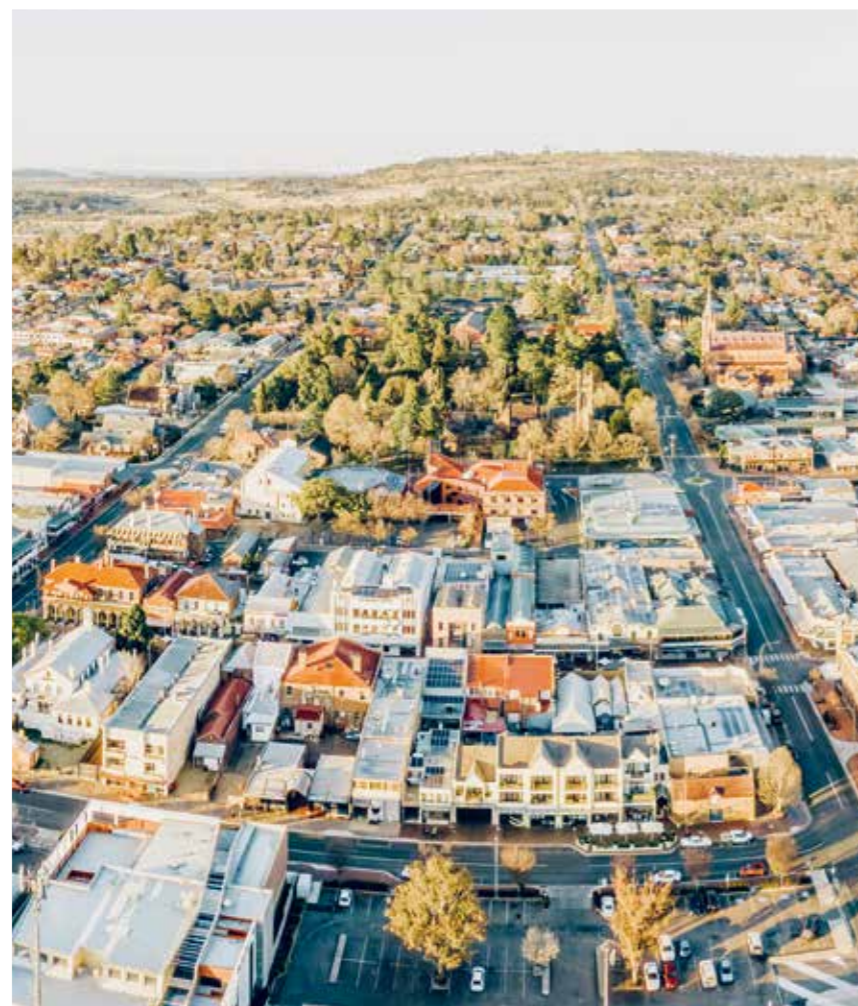
“A lot of work went into setting it up, but I couldn’t be happier with the end result. The room has a beautiful feel, a great outlook and these gorgeous big windows inviting the light to pour in – we look out onto the frost during winter and soak up the sun come summer. The separate room next door has been a huge bonus too, allowing my team and I to introduce reformer classes and teach side by side.

“It’s everything I dreamed of and honestly, I don’t miss Sydney one bit – both Daniel and I had our fill of it after 10 years and it was time for a new adventure. I’m so happy we made the decision to move when we did. It feels safe here, the people are wonderful and we’ve both had the opportunity to step up in our careers.”

Nicole is also sharing her love for Pilates with others wishing to teach. So far she’s overseen six new instructors undertake their observation and participation hours in the studio, while also supporting them with their assessments. As a side bonus, Njoy Pilates has welcomed a host of new teachers and now offers barre, fast barre, reformer, mat, stretch, jumpboard, yoga and pre and post-natal classes.

“It’s been so lovely to have more instructors in the space and be able to offer our clients a whole range of classes and times. We couldn’t be happier with the life we have here – we’ve bought a house and have invited two cats to join our family. Believe me, we won’t be going anywhere anytime soon. This is our happy place now.” *

REINVENTING A REGIONAL CITY



PHOTOGRAPHY Terry Cooke

IN CONVERSATION WITH **ARMIDALE REGIONAL COUNCIL**

Small businesses are the heartbeat of any regional city, and Café Patisserie and The Welder's Dog are two of Armidale's shining small biz lights. Both have big plans for the future – as does the new council. We sat down with Nathan Walker of Café Patisserie, Tom Croft and Dan Emery from The Welder's Dog, and Armidale Regional Council Mayor Sam Coupland to talk about the Council's plans to grow Armidale and the vital role small businesses have to play.

Breathing new life into a regional city is a big task. It doesn't happen overnight, of course, but it's one that Armidale Regional Council is driving towards. There's been much talk about how improved liveability and enabling jobs can support population growth – a progressive Council and the city's business owners – will both be key.

MAYOR SAM COUPLAND ON WHY ARMIDALE NEEDS TO INCREASE ITS POPULATION – AND HOW THAT'S LINKED TO SMALL BUSINESS.

"I've been back here for 10 years – I was at school and university here, I lived in Sydney, had a stint overseas, and when I came back I was really frustrated about how flat the place was. It wasn't the Armidale I remembered as a kid. There was a lack of vibrancy – it's really tangible – and that's why I wanted to run for council.

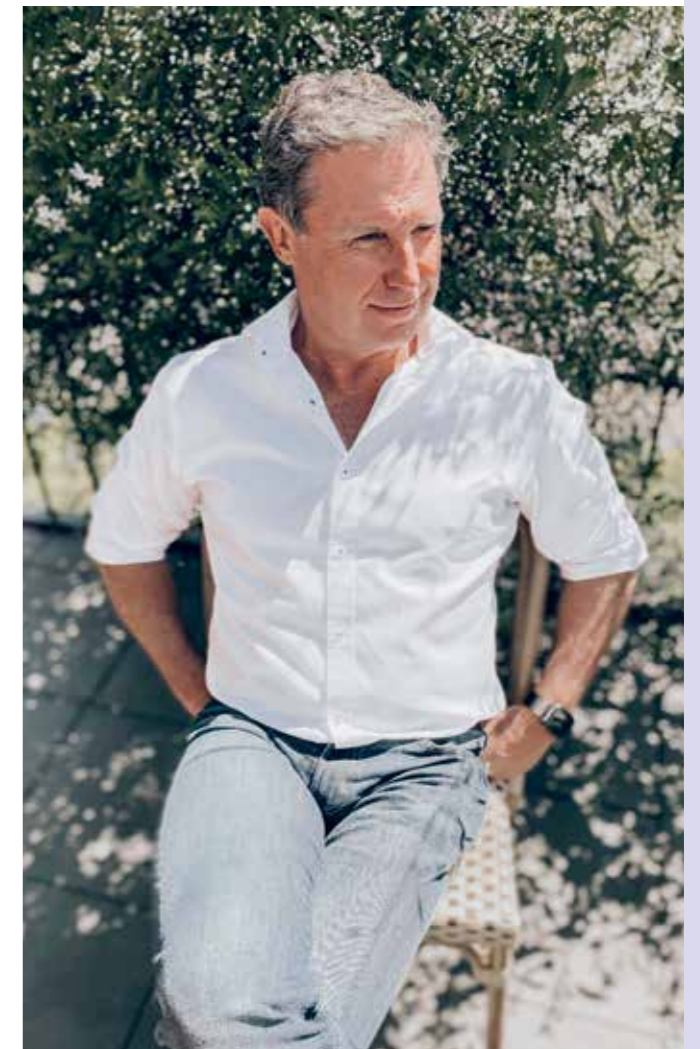
"This lack of vibrancy is a symptom of a low population – our population is just too small for a region our size – and everything else flows from that. That's why we want to grow – 10,000 people is achievable, and to do that we need to enable more jobs, and improve liveability. Businesses like The Welder's Dog and Café Patisserie do both because they provide employment and create that vibrancy we all crave."

SAM COUPLAND ON THE NEED FOR ARMIDALE TO INVEST IN QUALITY OF LIFE.

"The really noticeable piece that's missing is the vibrant public spaces and civic assets, and that's where Council needs to take the lead. We've got the natural beauty around us but we'll need more than that to compete with other regional cities for business investment and talented people. We need to improve our lifestyle proposition if we are to attract people to the city, many of whom can work from home and live anywhere in the world.

"Part of increasing our population, too, is stemming the exodus of people when they finish high school or uni here – what can we do to make Armidale a more attractive place to stay? And what can we do to make Armidale a more attractive place to return to when people are in their early 30s and want to settle down? Again, that's creating a vibrant region and enabling jobs and Council can do that both directly in terms of creating facilities, and indirectly by supporting local businesses to grow." »

"PART OF INCREASING OUR POPULATION, TOO, IS STEMMING THE EXODUS OF PEOPLE WHEN THEY FINISH HIGH SCHOOL OR UNI HERE – WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE ARMIDALE A MORE ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO STAY? AND WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE ARMIDALE A MORE ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO RETURN TO WHEN PEOPLE ARE IN THEIR EARLY 30S AND WANT TO SETTLE DOWN?"





NATHAN WALKER, OWNER, CAFÉ PATISSERIE, ON WORKING WITH COUNCIL TO GET THE NEW PREMISES OFF THE GROUND.

“Soon we’re going to be opening up new premises on the other side of town – we’ll keep our current place, but the new venue’s been on the cards for a while. We’ve obviously had to work with the Council to get it over the line – it’s in a residential area, and we knew it would be a bit of a challenge. We certainly didn’t go in there with the attitude that the Council should just give us what we want. The new team at the Council have stuck their neck out – they’ve put in a lot of hard work to help us get it happening, and you now have the confidence that if they say they’ll do something, it’ll happen. Previously, it might have been seen as a bit too hard, and it wouldn’t have got past the first hurdle – so as a small business owner here, that’s encouraging.”

NATHAN WALKER ON HOW THE TWO VENUES WILL COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER.

“The new premises will have a great production kitchen, and we’ll be doing the pastries there, we’ll have a takeaway and a section with the pies and patisserie. There’ll be a few seats, but mainly it’ll be takeaway. And then our current premises will become a cafe – it won’t be the patisserie anymore, we’ll revamp it, rename it and reinvent it.”

NATHAN WALKER ON CREATING A NEW VENUE WITH SUSTAINABILITY AT ITS HEART.

“Out the back of the new premises, we’ve got a huge garden so we’re going to grow our own veggies, which will supply both stores, and we’ve got an orchard planted down there as well. We’ll grow our different bits and pieces – strawberries and things like that – which we can then pick perfectly ripe in season and use in the patisserie, so that can only make things better. We’re going to put a beehive up there, so we’ll produce our own honey, and we’ll have passive solar panels and a 25,000-litre water tank. We’re trying to bring our overheads down so the business is much more efficient, and we can do that because we own the new place rather than rent it.”



DAN EMERY OF THE WELDER’S DOG ON MOVING INTO NEW PREMISES ON BEARDY STREET.

“I love Ross Noble’s building. One day I was in there and I said, ‘Ross, if you ever sell this place, give me a shout.’ So I left my number with him and three days later, he rang and said, ‘I actually didn’t know what I was going to do. But I figure I’ve been here 50 years, I’d better start thinking about retiring. So maybe I’d be interested in selling.’ And it sort of progressed from there. Ross said something like ‘One day I was a young bloke and I went to an old bloke wanting to buy this place. And now I’m the old bloke and you’re the young fella.’ We want to get a mural painted of him in the new place – he’s a cool character for town. We told him he can drink as much as he wants for free when we open!”

DAN EMERY ON CREATING A NEW-LOOK WELDER’S.

“We’ll get the brewery in there just as the brewhouse, so we can get out of our place over that side of town. So we’ll get in here and continue production, then get all our staff and everyone back together while we’re building the rest of it.”

“Our idea is that, as well as the brewery, it becomes a function centre with a full bar so you could have weddings and we could have live music events – it’ll also be our dispatch centre for other bars and a training facility for staff.”

“We want it to become a bit of a community hub, so there’ll be constant community events. For instance, on the weekend, we might have workshops for parents and kids where we build possum boxes, bird boxes or beehives.”

TOM CROFT ON WORKING WITH ARMIDALE REGIONAL COUNCIL TO GET THE NEW PREMISES UP AND RUNNING.

“We worked closely with Council to get it all done – they offered us their concierge service, which meant a quick and seamless process and they’ve helped us wherever they could. They see the value in creating a vibrant centre in Armidale, a place where people want to come, and hopefully we’re all playing our part in helping that happen too.”

“Traditionally, it seems when people have gone to Council, it’s been ‘you can’t do this, you can’t do that’. This time, it’s been ‘yeah, let’s try to make that happen,’ and they’ve got things happening. We all attended inspections together and there was a real sense of everyone being on the same side – we talked through it and all came away happy. We have always had a good relationship with Council, but there now seems to be a wider cultural shift – they’re trying to make things happen and find solutions, which is a significant change.”

SAM COUPLAND ON DRIVING ARMIDALE FORWARD.

“We want to be a seamless council – but one of our limitations is the legacy issues we’ve got. There’s been a lack of planning to ensure we can meet our housing needs for the next 20 years and no deliberate strategy to plan for and attract the jobs that will enable the region to grow – all of this work should have been done in the past 20 years, but wasn’t. That doesn’t make Armidale unique; it’s just a major frustration, particularly for the community. And it’s also not the sexy stuff that grabs headlines – but it is absolutely essential if we want to be in control of our own destiny.”

“Historically, the Council’s tried to save its way to success, which is a disaster. Saving your way to success just means you can’t invest in anything. You certainly can’t invest in the public infrastructure needed to improve our quality of life and entice people to make Armidale their home.”

“When we worked with The Welder’s Dog, they used our new planning concierge service which we introduced shortly after the new Council was elected. This is targeted at businesses looking to expand or new businesses coming to town. The concierge works with businesses to shape their plans, find suitably zoned land and ensure that they have a single point of contact to help them gain the necessary Council approvals. We want the process of bringing your business to Armidale or expanding your business to be seamless – that’s not saying that everything gets waved through. But if you’re doing the right thing and are serious about working with Council to find solutions, then we want to hear from you. It’s jobs that will drive the population growth we need – and that’s when the really good stuff starts to happen.” *





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IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK...

Sculpted from the bones of The Oxford Hotel, the revived Oxford on Otho has never stood taller thanks to new owners Gary and Wendy Cracknell and Brett and Emilie Tomlinson. Here, the hotel shares her story.

PHOTOGRAPHY Hannah Kate Photography

“It was 11 July 1885. The Thorley Brothers won the tender for 10,000 pounds and, in the space of just two short months, my walls stood tall – the first two-storey brick hotel in Inverell. As legend has it, a local labourer called Lochie McKenchnie laid 1500 bricks in one day for a wager of just 20 pounds.

“Thanks to him, and dozens more like him, my doors swung open for the first time on 25 September 1886. Back then, the owner William Onus leased me to his brother Joseph – all 40 rooms, 20 of which were fitted with the latest convenience; electric bells. A passageway once threaded below the balcony too, leading to a yard of 20 stall stables for patrons.

“By 1888, the town’s second public hall was built to the rear of my land, the aptly named Oxford Hall sitting pretty alongside the Oxford Auction Salesyard. Complete with a large stage and seating for 400-500 people, it was a place for entertainment, meetings and boxing bouts. I can still hear the voices, feel the music, smell the smoke. Cigarette box lids carried my name alongside the words ‘The Oxford Cigarette’ – while each cigarette was also emblazoned with gold letters spelling ‘The Oxford’. It was 1904 and I’d hit the big time.

“But that all came to an end when the hall was dismantled in 1911... except for the boxing, which carried on in the vacant land they left behind. In prouder times, my balcony held people high in moments of note – welcoming soldiers home from the Boer War, farewelling soldiers for World War II, and became a stage for political speeches and announcing election results. They were happy days, tarnished with sadness.

“Unfortunately, certain folks will seek mischief when the opportunity arises. Thieves seized their chance – along with my guests’ belongings – during such events, our heads conveniently turned. Fast forward to 1942 and a light-fingered chap named John Henry Hall even stole 10 chickens and a turkey for Christmas dinner! Just six of the chickens and the turkey made their way home to The Oxford that festive season.

“Before all that nonsense, my balcony was removed in 1939 and my namesake came down with it. I went on to become known as the Sportsmen’s Hotel, and then the Traveller’s Rest, neither of which ever quite seemed to fit. Still, progress came and sewerage was connected in 1953, my awning erected in 1958 and a great many renovation attempts made throughout the decades.

“While those publicans may be long gone, their patronage lives on, etching an everlasting mark on my walls. But it wasn’t until 2017, when I came up for sale once more, that I was given a very real, a very longed for, new lease on life.

“I met Gary and Wendy in 2017, who were joined by Brett and Emilie in 2018. Their vision, passion for historical buildings and skillset have seen these walls restored to their previous glory. My central staircase has never beamed brighter, proudly leading to my 10 exquisitely refurbished rooms – each complete with ensuite and divine historical moments captured behind glass panels. The lighting, the flooring, the soft furnishings and cozy nooks all sympathetically designed and chosen to celebrate who I once was, as well as who I’m about to be.

“The carriageway arch that once guided horse and carriages to the rear stables has also been reopened, while my timber ground floor now rests stronger than ever as polished concrete. At my heart – the core of the building – the second storey floor was removed to create an internal courtyard and upstairs mezzanine, complete with six roof windows. Today, I am continually bathed in light.

“My verandah, one of my proudest moments throughout the decades, has been restored too – the final piece needed to watch the new world go by. If you’d like to come see it for yourself, raise a toast with The Welder’s Dog bar and sleep soundly within my walls, I’m right where I’ve always been. You can call me Oxford on Otho now... and I can’t wait to meet you.” *

TIME OF YOUR LIFE

KATY DEE

Katy Dee's rule-breaking art is a wild celebration of flora and fauna, the way the light hits the shoreline and days gone by on pebble-stone beaches. It's freedom bursting forth from her studio doors, swiftly followed by Fleetwood Mac lyrics and the pitter patter of her paint-splattered ugg boots, darting from one canvas to the next. This is Katy's happy place – but whatever you do, don't ask her to paint a horse.

WORDS Steph Wanless
PHOTOGRAPHY Fire & Fly Media

Katy, an artist and print designer, has always lived life on the edge – by the ocean that is. From the UK's Seaford to Australia's Sawtell, she can't imagine spending her days any other way than beside the seaside. Her creative career to date has been anything but linear – and that's exactly how she likes it. Here's how her travels, from Sussex to this great southern land, unfolded...

1982-2000

Location: Seaford, Sussex, United Kingdom

Katy struggles to remember a time in her life without art and crafts – something she attributes to both her mum and dad.

“Mum is a really creative woman and was a very early influence on me. There was always a project going on – lots of papier-mâché and painting, making little books and stapling them together. Then she came home one day with those chocolate decorating kits. We filled them with plaster and painted them. Then there were the flowers – mum's garden was like her third child, still is today. Sadly I haven't inherited the green thumb, but growing up, our garden was wild with all sorts of colours. I think that's where my love for bold, bright flowers came from. I was so lucky to have a simple childhood, one bursting with colour and craft, pebble-stone beaches and fish and chips, bike rides and garden games.” »



2000-2005

Location: London College of Fashion, London – then SIAD, Farnham, Surrey

After highschool and a gap year, Katy flew her seaside coop for London's College of Fashion. It was equal parts exciting and terrifying.

"I'd just sat my A-levels, where I got a D in art because I couldn't paint a still life (don't ask me to draw a bowl of fruit, or even a horse, you'll get something similar to that of a two-year-old), and was accepted into this hugely prestigious school to study fashion. I was 19 years old and far from home. It was exciting, but also kind of terrifying. I learnt early on that it wasn't for me either. Most other students there weren't my people and I found London pretty overwhelming and scary to be honest. But it was an amazing experience, I still learnt from it and don't regret a thing.

"So I shifted from fashion in London to 3D design and glassblowing in Surrey, as you do. Why no one stopped me from doing that I'll never know. My mum and dad were just awesome, they supported anything I wanted to do and encouraged me to give it a crack. But halfway through I realised that wasn't for me either. Still, I saw it through till the end and learnt some amazing skills. To this day I have huge respect for glass artists, because I know the work that goes into it is just insane. I was too impatient, I need to see results immediately. Glassblowing is hours of work and then it can break at the last minute – I found that too mentally exhausting."

2007-2009

Location: Eastern Suburbs, Sydney

Up for a new adventure, Katy set sail for Australia, a backpack and her best friend in tow.

"It began as the typical down under backpacking trip. There were temp jobs by day, creative classes, workshops and wine by night. I wasn't trying to make money from my creativity, I was just exploring and having fun with whatever took my fancy – and my backpack budget could afford. I made lifelong friends and fell in love with this beautiful country. Towards the end of my time in Sydney I met James, my now husband, who encouraged me to stop procrastinating and start selling my work at both markets and then in time, online."

2009-2011

Location: London... again

London was calling – Katy and James went back to the motherland for family time, more creative experiences and, ultimately, to tie the knot.

"During this time I was working for a fashion company that made handbags. I was inspired to start sewing and make jewellery. As you can imagine, even my early designs were bold, bright, bursting with colour and I hit the markets under the name 'Shiztastic' to test the waters. It was scary, without a doubt, but I loved every minute and the feedback I got really added fuel to fire. I realised that, despite experimenting with so many different mediums, from jewellery to ceramics, textiles to woodwork, textile design always came back to the surface for me. I just loved the process of decorating things, turning them into something unique, colourful and taking the time to put my own Shiztastic stamp on it."



2011-2015

Location: Sydney... again

With another year of London life under her belt, Katy made the call to head back to Australia to further develop her digital design skills.

"I studied digital textile design at Enmore TAFE at night, while working in various administrative jobs by day – which I hated. But the evening classes were magic and really opened my eyes to a whole world I never knew existed. I undertook beginner and advanced courses in both Photoshop and Illustrator, which taught me all the basics I needed to go out on my own. At this stage I was well and truly stepping into the Shiztastic brand – a word that, to me, encompasses the fabulousness of colourful mess I embrace in my art."

2015-2016

Location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Not one to ever turn down an adventure, the Dees set sail for Malaysia for James' work.

"It was a fascinating year full of delicious exploration and a creative awakening. The city of Kuala Lumpur is full of treasure for any artist and I spent my days learning to screen print as well as volunteering, teaching English and playing badminton! It was such a unique opportunity and a really fun year."

2016-2019

Location: Sydney... again

Back in Sydney, Katy dived into a career with Digital Fabrics in Marrickville. It was here she learnt all the ins and outs of digital printing and started painting to create her own unique fabric designs.

"Once I learnt how to create fabric designs digitally – I started making my own. I'd paint these huge sheets, scan them into the computer and take the time to experiment with colour and form from there. All of my fabric designs start as original paintings. But it's only recently I've realised not all my work needs to end up on fabric, some of them are standalone works in their own right."

2019-2022

Location: Sawtell / Toormina

In search of a quiet, seaside life, Katy and James moved to Sawtell in November 2019, right before the pandemic hit.

"I've painted so much since moving here and started my dream role as store manager for Kaleidoscope at the end of 2021. I sell my artwork and products there, and have also been featured in local exhibitions and galleries. It's only been the past few years that I've started exploring my own painting style. Thanks to this regional, creative community we live in, I felt supported and realised I can take the time to explore the artist I really want to be.

"I'm a grotbag at heart. I pour a glass of wine, pop my ugg boots on, throw on some Fleetwood Mac and embrace the mess of it all. I love that I can express myself with colour and will often have seven to eight canvases on the go at once. I used to really think about what the end product needed to look like, but I'm trying not to worry about that so much. Instead, I'm letting the universe lead me wherever I'm meant to be and right now I just feel so lucky to live here – inspiration is right here on our doorstep." *

THE SEARCH FOR SHIZTASTIC

Katy's on a mission to share her work with galleries across the country, starting with her beloved home on the Mid North Coast. A mural is also high on her bucket list – but in the meantime, you can find her joy-filled creations at Kaleidoscope, Coffs Harbour. So if you need some colour in your life, track her down asap.

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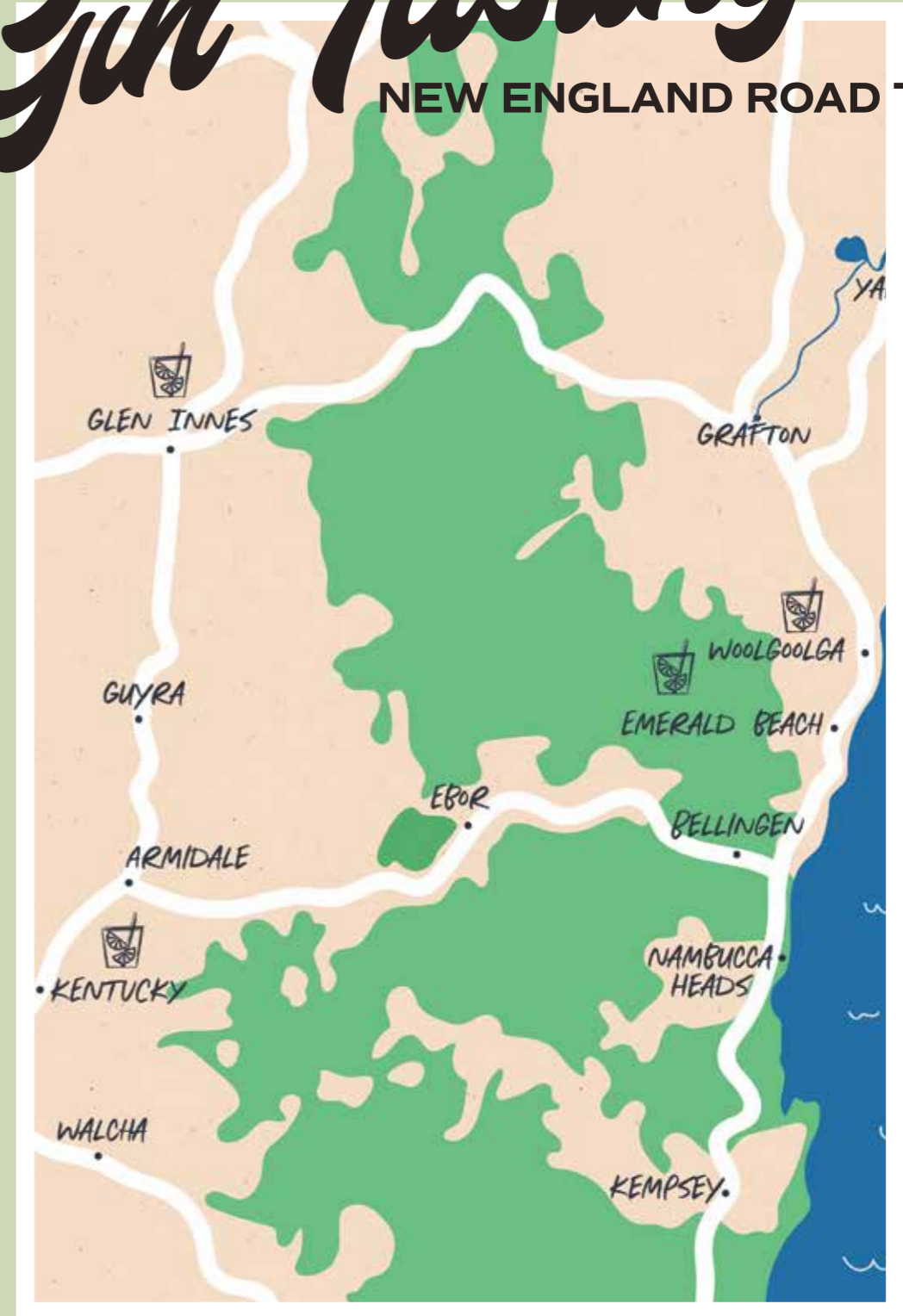
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AND DELIGHTS OF OUR GLORIOUS REGION.

FLOUR-FILLED DREAMS

Business acumen, baking skills and a passion for regional life – Katherine Sherrie is well-equipped for her new role at FPM Cereal Milling Systems.

WORDS Steph Wanless

The games Katherine Sherrie’s family played on road trips were a little different to your standard ‘I Spy’ or travel-sized ‘Ludo’. As a flour milling family with a passion for baked goods, the Sherries opted for ‘Name that crop!’ instead.

“We’d spend a lot of time on the road in country NSW and QLD, visiting farms and bakeries, so dad would quiz us on the crops we drove past along the way,” says Kat.

“He’d shout – ‘Kids, what’s that one?! No... it’s not sorghum, it’s barley!’ It’s so funny to look back on it now, but we’ve been in flour milling our whole lives, it’s who we are. We also have a firm rule to buy a sausage roll at every bakery we come across – obviously that’s crucial for quality control and to support our customers,” laughs Kat.

While the majority of her childhood was spent in Sydney, Kat’s parents Kevin and Robyn established FPM Cereal Milling Systems in Tamworth when she was 14 years old. From that moment on they visited the town regularly, spending long weekends and school holidays in regional NSW.

“My first job was in Tamworth, waitressing at a Thai restaurant during the Country Music Festival,” says Kat.

“I have so many fond memories of this town so it was really exciting to move here in November 2021 and seize the opportunity to work alongside my parents in the family business.”

FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

In a previous life, Kat racked up an impressive 12-year career in marketing and advertising in Sydney, Perth and the United States. She worked in technical audience marketing for Microsoft and most recently led a team of digital »





specialists in a Perth-based, full service agency focusing on social media, email marketing and digital content. While she loved every second of it – and established a rep as the workplace baker known for her gourmet sausage rolls – the enforced separation from her family due to Covid’s border closures ultimately triggered the move.

“I’M VERY CLOSE TO MY FAMILY, SO THAT TIME APART MADE ME CRAVE BEING HOME AND I FELT THAT PULL TO RETURN TO TAMWORTH.”

“My parents are also in their 60s now, they’re starting to think about the next chapter in their lives, so we talked about the possibility of either myself or my brother running the mill. He wasn’t keen, so we’re flipping the script and I’m here for every second of it.”

While she might be one of the very few women at the helm in Australia’s flour milling industry, Kat’s excited to use her well-honed business nous to forge her own path in the male-dominated profession. Future plans include overcoming logistical challenges, expanding the brand’s product line and staying nimble.

“Freight and logistics is our number one challenge – but I also think that’s an area of opportunity,” Kat explains.

“Flour is a low-margin product, so any increase in freight can easily take out our profit margin. That’s where the potential for future growth lies, whether that be in the form of a distribution warehouse in a city centre or investing further in our own tankers so we control our transportation.

“As for our product line, we’re primarily milling wheat, rye, and some other specialty products like purple wheat and spelt. But we’re getting more requests from our customers for alternative grains as people switch to more sustainable, plant-based diets – so that’s a really exciting area for us to explore.”

HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCT

While Kat’s keen to see the business evolve, it will be a gradual process working alongside her parents over the next few years, learning the trade and building relationships with their growers and customers.

“I’ve often worked with clients who want to get bigger and grow their market share rapidly – but bigger isn’t always better. We’d rather grow organically and ensure we can maintain a high-quality product,” adds Kat.

“Our size means we can easily change our milling process if someone comes to us with a specific request – being nimble is a huge opportunity and that’s how my parents started the business, from the perspective of doing something differently.

“That’s made us a very unique, agile mill and we’ll always stay true to those roots. Most of the growers we source from we’ve been using since the business started, in some cases we’re now dealing with the children of those farmers. I love that and I’m so excited to be a part of the next generation charged with steering this ship, right alongside them.” *

AN EDUCATION IN FLOUR

Earlier this year, Kat Sherrie won a Future Women / NSW Government Rural Women’s scholarship – a 12-month leadership program awarded to just 24 women from across the state in rural and regional areas.

The program is designed to connect driven and passionate women from all ages and backgrounds to assist them to develop leadership skills and help them progress to the next stage of their careers.

Prior to that, Kat also won the 2020 Future Leader of the Year for Western Australia by the Australian Marketing Institute.

“It’s a huge honour to be recognised in these ways, and be given the opportunity to learn more alongside some incredible women. I’m also studying a Flour Milling Certificate through the UK Flour Millers distance learning program, a globally-recognised milling qualification. I’m excited to learn more about how we can combine traditional skills with modern technology to create beautiful products.”



BEYOND YEAR 12

Calrossy Anglican School focuses on the success and wellbeing of every student – from their first day at preschool until the time comes for them to decide what to do beyond year 12. Here's how one school supported three women in three very different career paths.

"I work with the students to offer advice, support and information to help them make the best career decisions possible," says Charles Impey, Calrossy Anglican School Careers Advisor.

"Our current Calrossy Careers Program includes a year 10 careers and community elective, as well as a careers mainstream program covering all the essential areas like career quizzes, resumes, job applications, interviews, career planning and career expectations, employer expectations and business and industry landscape awareness.

"We also visit 14 universities between February and August each year, as well as the Tamworth TAFE Campus for a tour. We play a lead role in engaging with groups including Housing Industry Association (HIA), Defence Force Recruiting, Mining NSW and Apprenticeship Service Providers to host information sessions, workplace visits and trade and career events.

"Finally, we have established relationships through volunteering and mentoring programs with Ronald McDonald House, Bupa Aged Care and the Local Landcare Group to help ensure our students have an acute appreciation of the diversity and the depth of local communities, essential to becoming part of a local community when the students leave Calrossy to pursue their life and career ambitions.

"When we look at connecting our existing students with those who have been in their shoes and have transformed from 'Calrossy Student' into 'Calrossy Alumni' flourishing in their chosen career, we realise nothing is impossible. Careers are limitless and this is why we value enormously the stories and the experiences our alumni are able to share with our students who have a thirst for the knowledge our alumni have built since leaving the school gates."



CAITLYN SHERWOOD
Architectural Assistant, Webber Architects

"My high school art teacher, Mrs Brennan, taught me to trust the process. That you don't need to know the end result for it to be beautiful – there will be problems throughout any process and that's okay. To be able to create is such a gift and she taught me to use it. Without her words, I might not have chosen to sit in on the architecture lecture at the University of Newcastle open day. It was a career I'd never considered before, but I'm so grateful I pursued it.

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE COMFORTABLE WITH NOT KNOWING EVERYTHING, AND ACKNOWLEDGING THAT YOU ARE ALWAYS LEARNING."

"Trusting my intuition is the biggest decision I've made in my career so far. It's a steep learning curve – architecture is a way of thinking, you have to adjust the way you see and document the environment. Leaning into your intuition and trusting the process is scary, but worth it. It's important to be comfortable with not knowing everything, and acknowledging that you are always learning.

"I currently have my Bachelor of Architecture, but in order to move forward you require your Master of Architecture. So I'll be studying for the next two years while continuing to work at Webber Architects – from there the opportunities are endless."

MADDISON CROSS

Food and Safety Meat Assessor (FSMA), Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)

"It was a career day at school, that's where my interest in the meat industry was first ignited. The event was hosted by Teys and Thomas Foods and showcased opportunities the sector can provide. From there it was my careers advisor and agricultural teachers who really supported me in getting into this type of work.

"I started as a labourer on night shift while completing school, then moved into the role as an AAO, otherwise known as meat inspector. This step up gave me the opportunity to complete my Certificates III and IV in meat safety where I gained a huge amount of knowledge and ultimately led me to where I am today, working as a Food and Safety Meat Assessor (FSMA) for the government.

"BUT THIS CAREER HAS BUILT ME INTO THE WOMAN I AM, FORGING A PATH IN THIS MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRY."

"I love what I do. I'm right where I want to be and learn more every day. If you'd asked me three years ago where I see myself in the future, I'd never have been able to give you an answer. But this career has built me into the woman I am, forging a path in this male-dominated industry. I want to prove that being determined and committed to what you do will pay off."



MEG GREENWOOD
Graduate for the NSW Inspector of Custodial Services (ICS)

"I had two careers advisors, Mr Impey and Mr Ambrose. They supported me in deciding what my next step out of high school might look like, and gave me the resources to feel confident about my decision.

"While deep down I knew choosing what to study wasn't the be-all and end-all – there were days when it felt like it was. It seemed as though everyone else had it all figured out. But in the end I went with my heart and after graduating I headed to Sydney to study Criminology at UNSW.

"WHILE DEEP DOWN I KNEW CHOOSING WHAT TO STUDY WASN'T THE BE-ALL AND END-ALL-THERE WERE DAYS WHEN IT FELT LIKE IT WAS."

"I loved every second and secured an internship at the ICS in my final year – I recently found my way into a graduate role there, so I must have made a good impression! Looking back now, I can see there are many ways to fry an egg – but choosing to study what I loved (rather than what I thought I should do) really paid off. I love not knowing where this first career move might take me next, but I certainly know I've taken the right first step." *

*
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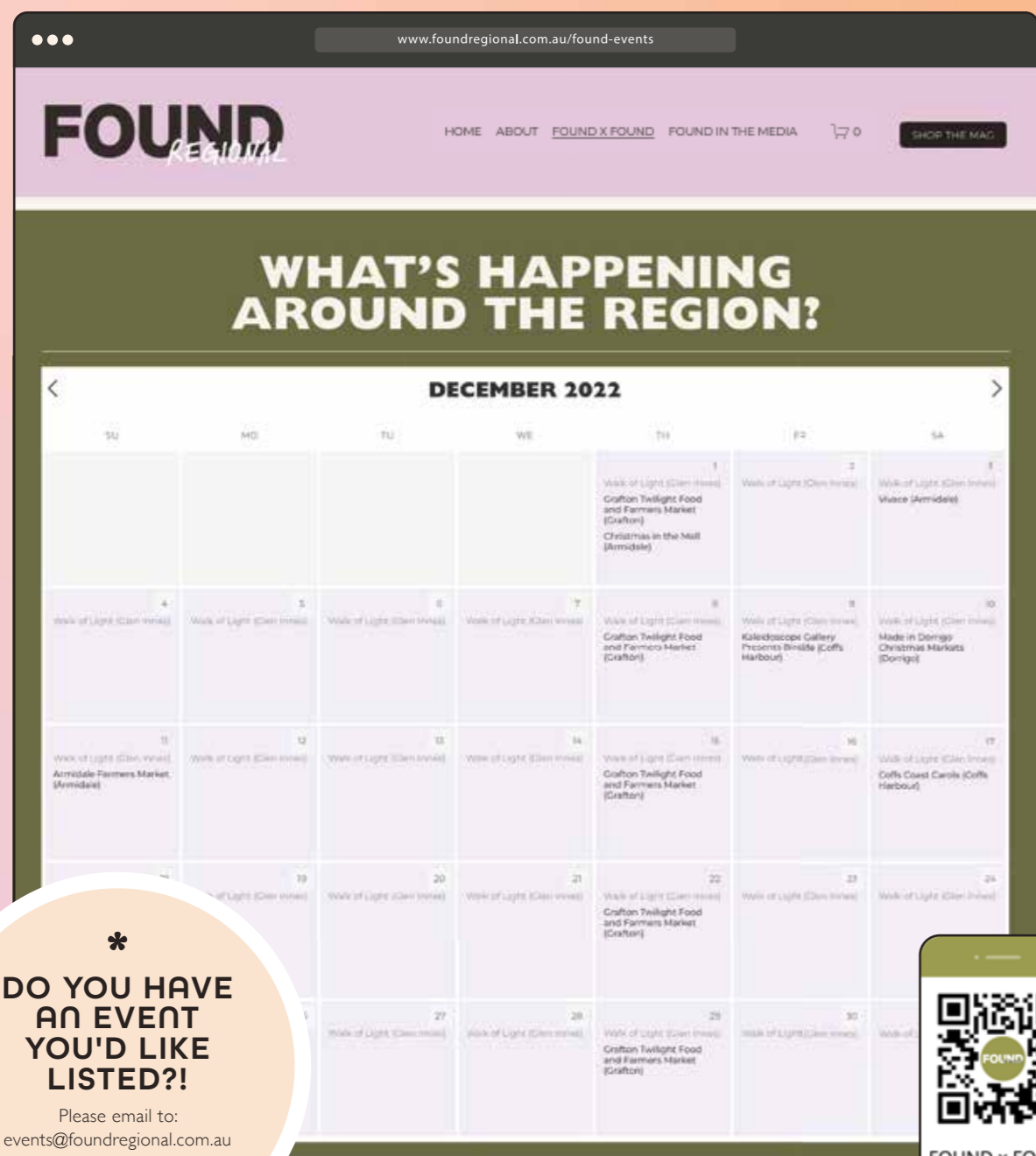
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IN THE FRAME



WITH NERAM

A CURATED GLIMPSE INTO THE ART WORLD WITH ARMIDALE'S OWN NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL ART MUSEUM.

STRONG

A review of works by Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Aida Tomescu, Barbara McKay and Hilarie Mais.

Exhibition at New England Art Museum, Armidale
19 August – 16 October 2022
Curator: Belinda Hungerford

WORDS Alistair Noble

neram.com.au
@neramuseum

This exhibition invited us to consider magisterial works by a group of older women known for working on a large scale. As curator Belinda Hungerford has written, women are ‘creating some of the most interesting, challenging, and powerful art’ of our times. Collectively, the work here is ‘strong’ in many respects – most notably in the sense of sheer physicality, both in the powerful presence of the works themselves and the energetic creative processes.

Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda Sally Gabori (c. 1924-2015) and Emily Kame Kngwarreye (1910-1996) both came to painting late in life, producing thousands of works during their final years. While the painting medium was new in their last years, the underpinning knowledge and creativity were long established through a lifetime of cultural practice. Gabori’s floating expanses of startling colour seem to invite a topographical view, like islands knitted into a broad environment – yet sometimes one feels the image tilt forwards, and the mysterious shapes suddenly coalesce like a figure rising from the ground.

Kngwarreye’s paintings are built from repetitions – a form of amplification, as June Ross has written in one of the catalogue essays. Sometimes, the repetition reminds us of flowers spreading across the central Australian desert after rain; or, in the austere works of her last year, like ceremonial dancers moving on the dusty ground.

Aida Tomescu (1955-) is renowned for sculptural encrustations of layered oil paint in colours of blood, red wine and sakura blossom. The richness of these gigantic works must be experienced physically to be understood. Up close, they vibrate with terrific energy. Stepping back, one begins to see that the organisation is more calligraphic than pictorial – an underlying elegance that supports a forceful surface.

Like Tomescu, Hilarie Mais (1952-) was born and educated outside of Australia – in her case, in England. Both sculptural and painterly, her work is carefully crafted and complex, sitting away from the wall in structured layers while

THIS PAGE
1. Hilarie Mais. *Lace Ghost* (detail), 2018. Acrylic paint, wood, 210 x 187 x 4cm. Artwork photography Mike Terry. Courtesy the artist and KRONENBERG MAIS WRIGHT. © the artist. 2. *STRONG* 2022 Exhibition view – Photograph by Simon Scott Photography. 3. Emily Kame Kngwarreye *Untitled* (Yam) (detail), 1995. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 198 x 158cm. Private Collection. Courtesy Utopia Art Sydney. Artwork photography courtesy Utopia Art Sydney. © Emily Kngwarreye/Copyright Agency, 2022.



1.



1.



2.



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3.

casting further integral layers of shadow. Over these multiple grids, Mais paints finely-graded colours inspired by plants, landscapes and weather.

Barbara McKay’s (1940-) paintings balance vigorous abstraction against extreme subtlety and delicacy. We discover a vibrant energy of sweeping gestures and a layered depth of colour receding into the canvas. While Tomescu’s work lunges forward, forcing us at a certain stage of contemplation to step back, McKay’s painting draws us in from across the room and the experience moves from vastness to a closer examination of tiny, significant details. As McKay herself has said, we observe the paint as it ‘dances onto the surface’.

This exhibition of work by senior women artists represents a great gift to us all. In the strength of this work, the independence and energy of these artists, and their power and wisdom, we find both inspiration and learning. *

EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. JUST NOT AUSTRALIAN

Running until 29 January 2023

Just Not Australian presents Australian practitioners at the forefront of national debate and practice. Drawing together 20 artists from diverse cultural backgrounds, their differing ideas and perspectives on nationhood coexist within this timely thematic show. Showcasing the common sensibilities of satire, larrikinism and resistance so as to present a broad exploration of race, place and belonging, *Just Not Australian* interrogates what it means to be Australian at this challenging point in time.

Tony Albert. *Exotic Other*, 2018. Found kitsch objects applied to vinyl letters, 350 x 600cm (variable).

2. JAMES ROGERS: CONDITIONS

Running until 29 January 2023

New England-based artist James Rogers is a poetic sculptor encapsulating a strength and fluidity of form within his vertical steel structures; standing perfectly balanced within the space they inhabit. *Conditions* focuses on Roger’s use of steel mesh that creates optical illusions in positive and negative space.

James Rogers *Daybreak* 2021. Waxed steel. 195 x 140 x 70cm.

3. DEBBIE TAYLOR-WORLEY: FROM WHENCE WE CAME

Running until 29 January 2023



Debbie Taylor-Worley investigates the colonial frontier and the relationships formed between her ancestors, both wadjin (white women) and yinarr (Gamilaraay women) delineated by their relationships to the land and water. Working across textiles, ceramics and photography, Taylor-Worley juxtaposes colonial and indigenous histories.

Debbie Taylor-Worley *WUN-GA-LI NGURRAMBAA WINANGA-LI*. Exhibition view 2021.

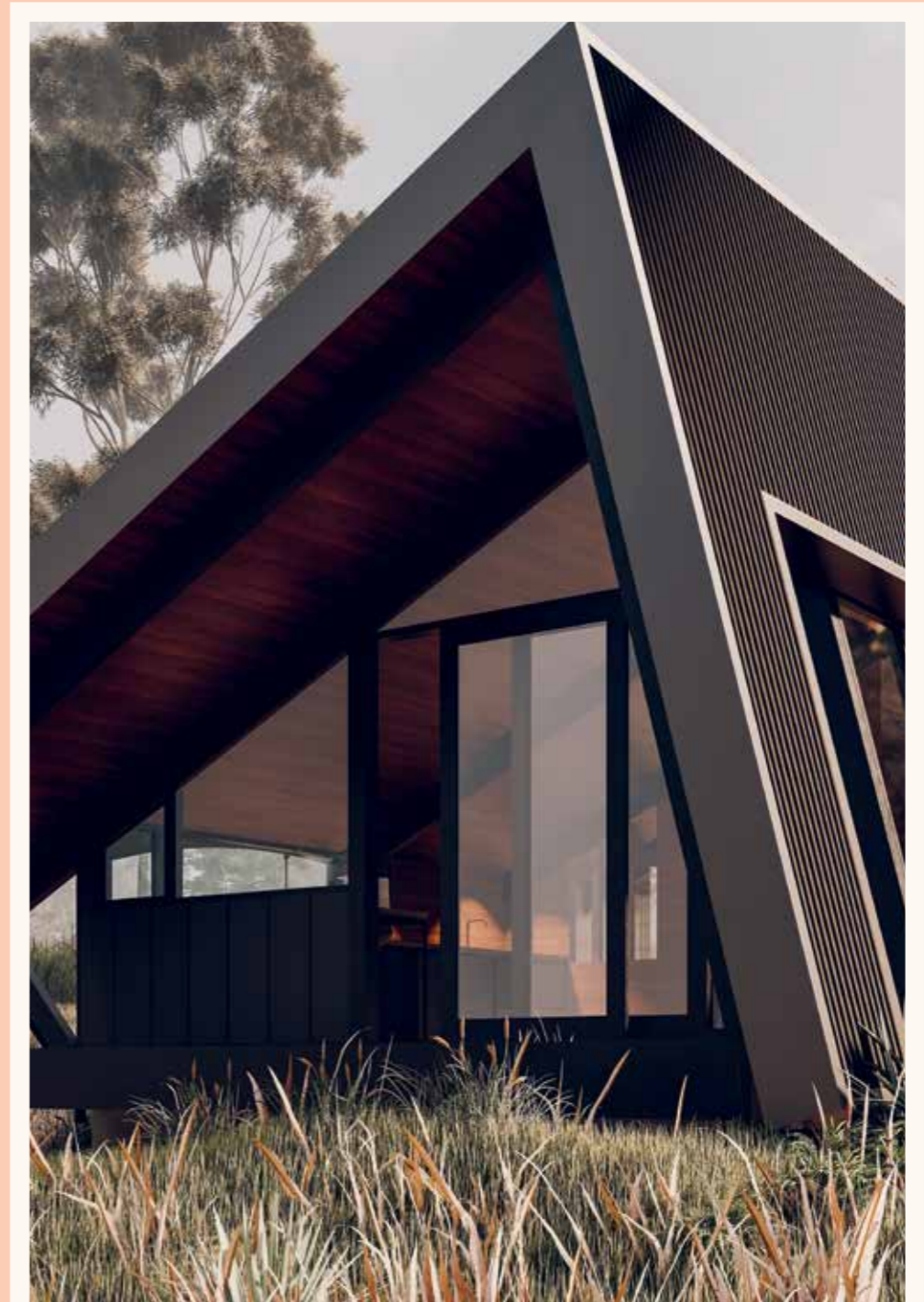
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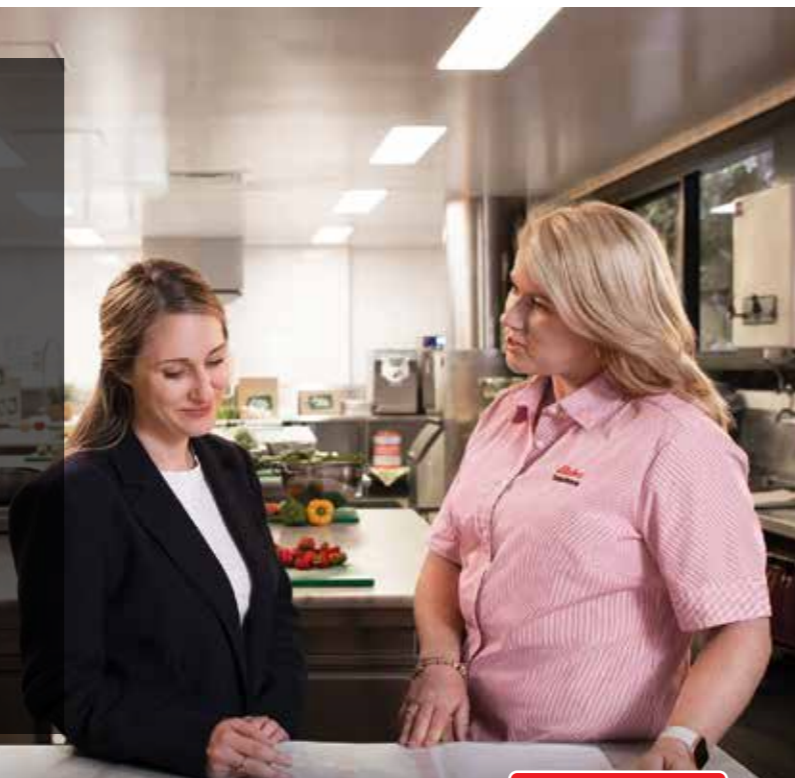
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ECO WARRIOR TALES FROM ACROSS THE LAND, SHOWCASING THE SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES BUSINESSES ARE BUILDING FROM THE GREEN GROUND UP.

DIVING INTO DATA... AND REGIONAL LIFE

While Roberts & Morrow are celebrating 70 years in business, the accounting firm continues to roll with the times. Here, Derek Repp, Partner and Head of the Business Intel team, tells *FOUND Regional* about how he found himself in Armidale, why he's searching for boomerangs and what the business is doing to best support their clients' futures.

"I actually grew up in the US, in Washington State. The accent's a bit of a giveaway right? I went to university in Los Angeles and had been working there for a couple of years when I made the move to Sydney for work and met my now wife, Tessa. We ended up staying there for nine years, before moving to Armidale in April 2016 with our two sons in tow, our third on the way.

"We'd looked at a few different regional towns and decided to give Armidale a go – my wife's from Glen Innes, so we had ties to the area and knew it had a great sense of community, wide open spaces and huge opportunities for us as a family. We arrived without jobs, so after a couple of months on the ground, I began looking for work.

"I found Roberts & Morrow and was thrilled to be given the opportunity to establish the business advisory arm of the business. We've recently rebranded and are now known as Business Intel – and that, put simply, is the majority of what we do. We use a business's data and financial records to provide analysis and insight to help them better run their organisation. Further to this, we seek to work with our clients to develop appropriate strategies for their business.

"The data that organisations have is often disorganised or goes unused, when in fact, it offers huge potential for businesses wanting to better understand their operations, their audience and their client base. It can ultimately be used as a tool to make better decisions.

"Performance analytics isn't anything new, but it has largely been the domain of bigger organisations. The Roberts & Morrow Business Intel team is changing that – we're here to make it accessible to small businesses and it's getting a lot of traction. From originally being a one-person gig, now it's Vivian Crick and myself in the Armidale team, and we have Emilio Chadinha, Sean Boer and Sam Williams in the Brisbane team.

"Our biggest challenge is finding the right people to work with us. It doesn't matter if they've been in the area forever, are a newcomer to it like I was, or what we call a boomerang – like Vivian – who went away and are looking to return home.

"Life's good here in the New England region, better than good. It's so much easier to build friendships, to establish deeper relationships, because time is on your side. No more commuting, no more setting aside entire days for one outing, we have multiple social events every weekend, and it just makes life so much more enjoyable.

"The work is fulfilling too. I can see that what we're doing is really making a difference to small businesses – because they're the people who truly need it, who can truly benefit from it and being a part of that is hugely rewarding. It keeps you humble too, and that's what the Roberts & Morrow Business Intel team is all about.

"We're cautious about calling ourselves business advisors, that suggests we have all the answers. Instead, we bring our observations and our analysis to our clients and work alongside them to make more informed decisions for their future. They're the ones who are at the coalface of their business, they're the experts in what they do.

"Some of them have built their businesses up over 20, 30 or 40 years, we're not about to start telling them how to run their business, but rather bring a complementary skillset. It's something they might not have seen before, but it's also something they should have access to and will serve them, and their business, well in the years to come." *

*
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Derek Repp and Vivian Crick of the
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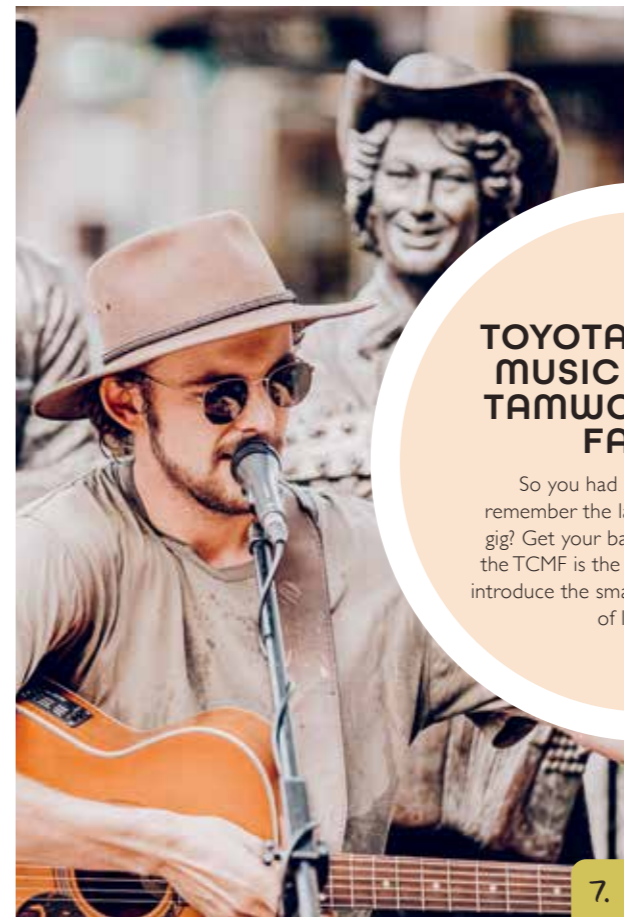


Some folks begin their annual pilgrimage to the Toyota Country Music Festival Tamworth (TCMF) as early as December. Others simply rock up on the day. No matter how you choose to lap it up, TCMF week offers something for everyone. True to its country roots, you'll discover a mix of traditional, Americana, blues, roots, Alt-country, bluegrass, honky-tonk and more – not to mention the market stalls, performers, food zones and carnival rides.

So whether you're in town with your mates or family, your new BFF or your long lost love, the streets of Tamworth are the place to be this 13-22 January. Here's how we suggest you soak up the scene...



*
TOYOTA COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL TAMWORTH WITH FRIENDS
 So you want to see something, feel something, hear something real? Something a little left of field, gritty and raw? Here's your chance to check out some of the best venues that come hand-in-hand with TCMF.
 *



*
TOYOTA COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL TAMWORTH WITH FAMILY
 So you had kids and now can't remember the last time you went to a gig? Get your band t-shirts ready folks, the TCMF is the perfect opportunity to introduce the small humans to the power of live music.
 *



FOUND X FRIENDS

LISTEN TO...

1. THE WELDER'S DOG

There'll be wild times ahead at The Welder's Dog thanks to live music daily on their Dog House Stage. Housed in a converted old drive-thru Rural Produce Store, Welder's has been providing the good folk of Tamworth with the craftiest of craft beer and local spirits since 2017. We'll cheers to that!

37 Dowe Street
 @theweldersdog_tamworth

2. THE TAMWORTH HOTEL

You'll find this art deco beauty smack bang in the heart of Tamworth, on Marius Street opposite the railway station. Their biggest draw card? Free gigs in their stellar beer garden. They'll serve up hearty meals and craft beers alongside some of the finest tunes you've ever heard.

147 Marius Street

3. THE LONGYARD HOTEL

We've got two words for you: beer garden. That's right folks, The Longyard is your classic, laidback watering hole, complete with a dreamy outdoor set-up and ticketed concerts to musos like Casey Barnes, The Pigs and The Viper Creek Band. That means stellar tunes, good grub and the stars above – winning.

10/12 Ringers Road
 @longyardhotel

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4. CAMP GROUNDS COFFEE SHOP

Because first we do the coffee. Then we do the things. Open from 6am daily, the Camp Grounds crew won't let you down – head on in for that crucial 'top of the morning to you' caffeine hit. While you're there, grab an espresso or chai soft serve (a TCMF special!) and take the time to check out their stellar merch... retro vibes aplenty.

37 Dowe Street
 @campgroundstamworth

5. HISSY FITS CAFE

Despite the name, there will be ZERO hissy fits when you bring the crew here for lunch. We're talking burgers, bagels, burritos – add a milkshake chaser and a blueberry muffin for the road and life – is – good.

457 Peel Street
 @hissyfitscafe

6. THE TUDOR HOTEL

Did someone say rooftop bar? We're there. Established way back in 1835, The Tudor is considered a Tamworth institution. Wrap up the perfect day with a classic schnitty or rump steak, salt and pepper squid or a serve of shoyu ramen. Either way, you're winning.

327 Peel Street

FOUND X FAMILY

LISTEN TO...

7. PEEL STREET BUSKERS

On a tight budget? We hear you. Luckily, busking is one of the most anticipated aspects of the festival every year, with up to 300 buskers performing on Tamworth's Peel Street – otherwise known as the 'Boulevard of Dreams'. We're talking up-and-coming entertainment at its finest for the grand price of zilch, zero, nada. But if you do have some loose change to spare – toss a few coins in an open guitar case and make someone's dreams come true. PS: Keith Urban and Kasey Chambers busked here as kids!

8. MACCA'S STAGE

Do you have a budding muso in the family? Head along to the Golden Gig talent competition, sponsored by Macca's, for an inspiration hit like no other. This is where the next generation of stars snap up the chance to kick-start their musical journey – once again, it won't cost you a dime.

9. CONCERTS AT TOYOTA PARK

This lush green location is home to a whole range of community performances throughout the Festival. Pick your stage from the 'Performance Circle' or on the back of the Festival ute, then share your talents with locals and visitors alike in one of Tamworth's largest venues – the memories made here will last a lifetime.

DINE WITH...

10. HOPSCOTCH RESTAURANT & BAR

Searching for brekkie with a side serving of play park? Hopscotch has got you covered. Found on the edge of Bicentennial Park with Tamworth's Regional Playground literally next door, you'll be suited and booted for pancakes and play in one fell swoop.

Tamworth Regional Playground
 Bicentennial Park Corner
 Kable Avenue and Hill Street
 @hopscotchrestaurant

11. JOE MAGUIRES

Did someone say meal deal? Joe did! Head to Joe Maguires for a hearty, budget-friendly meal including rissoles, rump steak or your classic schnitty. Throw in a kids' playground and alfresco dining for family vibes aplenty, all day long.

148 Peel Street
 @joemaguirespub

12. CBD PRECINCT

Picture this – music playing, crowds buzzing, stars shining and food trucks dishing up a whole range of delicious dinner options. Even the fussiest of eaters will find something to put a smile on their dial. So head to Fitzroy Street for your family dinner dash, fun vibes guaranteed.



*
**TOYOTA COUNTRY
MUSIC FESTIVAL
TAMWORTH WITH
CREATIVE FOLK**

We see you creative souls – the folks here for all kinds of sights and sounds, something new and unpredictable blended with a classic country beat and rock-inspired riffs. Welcome to town, here's what's in store for you.

*

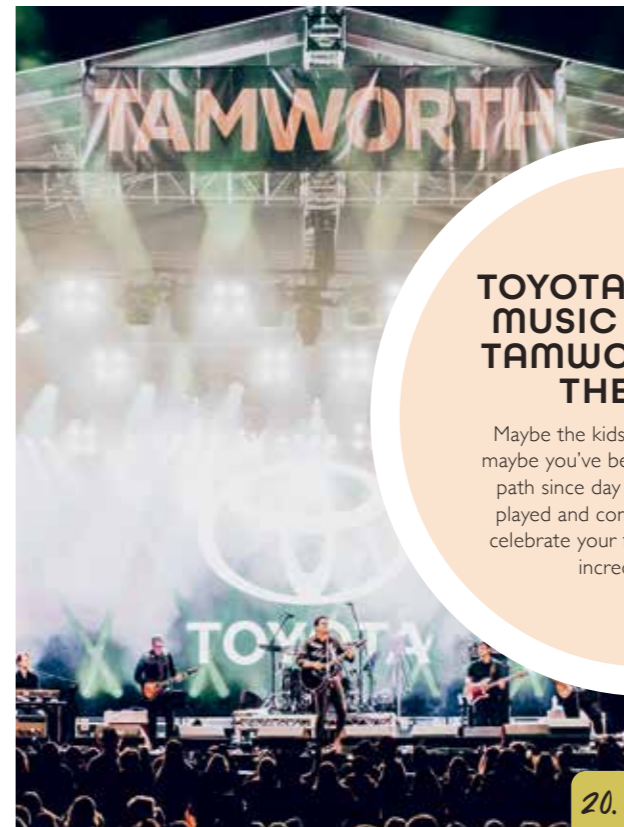


14.

17.



18.



20.

23.

*
**TOYOTA COUNTRY
MUSIC FESTIVAL
TAMWORTH WITH
THE FREE**

Maybe the kids have flown the nest, maybe you've been treading your own path since day one. Either way, well played and congrats. Here's how to celebrate your freedom at this year's incredible TCMF.

*



FOUND X CREATIVE FOLK

LISTEN TO...

13. PICKERS NIGHT AT THE PUB

This long-standing tradition is not to be missed. Hosted by Anthony Walmsley, Pickers night at The Pub will feature a variety of special guests on Tuesday nights from 9pm till midnight. The stage will be set for some of the biggest names in the industry, so come along to this great community event that's been running for 20 years and counting.

99 Gunnedah Road
@thepubtamworth

14. TOYOTA STAR MAKER

Keith Urban. Lee Kernaghan. Kasey Chambers. Beccy Cole. Troy Cassar-Daley. Just a handful of country music legends who have made their name thanks to the Toyota Star Maker talent quest. Head to the Toyota Park Stage in Bicentennial Park to check out tomorrow's country music superstars.

Bicentennial Park
Kable Avenue

15. MOONSHINERS HONKY TONK BAR

This is a serious country music venue, serving up some of the best live artists this side of Nashville, Tennessee. This TCMF will see the likes of Darlinghurst hit the stage, not to mention stunning vocalists like Andrew Swift and Max Jackson. A cracking venue with a rocking atmosphere, Moonshiners Honky Tonk Bar is Tamworth's country spirit in bar form.

186 Bridge Street
@moonshinershonkytonkbar

DINE WITH...

16. RUBY'S CAFE

Kick-start your day with Ruby's Cafe. Tucked away in a private garden on Tamworth's main street, this stunning heritage building is the perfect place to soak up the sun while savouring the menu's seasonal, local produce. PS – treat yourself to a little something from the gorgeous gift store!

494 Peel Street
@rubys_cafe_

17. DEVA COFFEE AND CHOCOLATE CAFE

It's crucial one keeps their energy levels up during the festival – and you know what helps with energy levels? Chocolate. When the cocoa cravings hit, look no further than Deva Coffee and Chocolate Cafe. You'll be spoiled for choice thanks to a range of goodies baked fresh daily. While you're there, grab some of the house's own Deva Cacao chocolate. Divine!

192 Brisbane Street
@devacacao_chocolatecafe

18. PAPA LUIGI'S

This is not your average pizza. This is the real deal, all authentic, made from scratch using Nonna's secret recipe kind of pizza. Flour is imported from Italy, pizza sauce is slow cooked for six hours and the Vitalone family are on hand to ensure your experience is joy-filled and fun, just like the Sunday dinners they spent growing up at Nonna's house.

414 Peel Street
@papa_luigis_

FOUND X THE FREE

LISTEN TO...

19. TAMWORTH REGIONAL ENTERTAINMENT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

If you're the type to go big or go home, the TRECC is the place for you. Home to the Toyota Golden Guitar Awards, the venue hosts must-see concerts for up to 4800 people – and this TCMF will be no different. Don your red carpet-ready threads and get prepped to see incredible live music from country music royalty like Troy Cassar-Daley and Lee Kernaghan.

Greg Norman Drive, Hillvue

20. TOYOTA PARK

Roll up! Roll up! The Toyota Park stage plays host to an exceptional line-up of artists for the full 10 nights of the TCMF – and it's free! Performers like Adam Hervey and Melanie Dyer have graced this stage in years gone by, and this festival is set to be just as exciting. It's a bucket list event if ever we saw one.

Bicentennial Park

21. BANDS AT WESTS DIGGERS

West's is a go-to, must-see, don't miss gathering place for Australian country music greats. In short, it becomes a mecca for Tamworth locals and visitors alike during the festival, showcasing an amazing line-up of talent including 8 Ball Aitken and Michelle Little. Giddy up!

4 Kable Avenue

DINE WITH...

22. THE BELL HOUSE TAMWORTH

You had me at ricotta hotcakes with blueberry compote, Canadian maple syrup and whipped butter. If eggs are more your morning vibe, there's plenty to go round thanks to Chook-a-Look eggs from nearby Uralla. Yep, you'll be well fuelled for the day ahead thanks to the Bell House.

Suite 1, 152 Marius Street
@the_bellhouse_tamworth

23. BICENTENNIAL PARK

Sometimes you just can't beat a picnic lunch – and Bicentennial Park offers the perfect patch for alfresco dining – right in front of the Toyota Park Stage. Grab your super sanger supplies from a nearby supermarket, then head on down to feel the grass between your toes and the sun on your skin – bliss. (PS – there's also a separate licensed marquee in the park, access is yours for a small fee!)

24. THE POST OFFICE HOTEL

Dinner in the heart of Tamworth's CBD – what a way to wrap up a stellar TCMF! The Post Office Hotel offers the perfect place to sit back, watch the hustle and bustle of festival fun, all while enjoying a hearty meal and an ice-cold brew. Cheers!

8 Fitzroy Street

DREAM SANDWICH



A CELEBRATION OF FOOD AS A STORYTELLER, CULTURAL PECULIARITIES, NOTICING THE UNNOTICED, NOSTALGIA AND LOVE.



THE BETTY

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY Jen Drew
@adventuresofjen

For this year's Christmas cake (Bûche de Noël) I've decided to opt for understated and traditional...

Hello 1980s Christmas tack. Full blown Christmas nostalgia in cake form. I call this The Betty.

My tried and true philosophy is that a cake needs to taste as good as it looks. Otherwise what's the damn point?! But this cake has me going way off script. So let me revise my philosophy to say a cake needs to taste as good as it looks EXCEPT for nostalgic purposes (not quite as catchy but there you have it).

I love a good Bûche de Noël. December in Paris is all about the best pastry chefs and their Bûches. They are perfection. A solid Christmas memory for another time.

Today, I'm combining my love of a good Bûche de Noël and rolling it all up (pun intended) with a good amount of late 1980s Christmas nostalgia. The resulting magic is dedicated to my grandmother, the unforgettable Betty Cherry (yes, that's her actual name and it's amazing).

December at Betty's house was magic for me and my sister. Usually, after a game of snakes and ladders she'd created with a Texta on the back of a Cornflakes box, we'd gather in her tiny living room next to the cabinet (where she kept the 'good' glasses) and watch her put Bing Crosby's White Christmas on the record player.

Next, the dusty old Christmas tree box would be brought out and that beautiful, balding old tree would be erected. That thing lost more and more tinsel leaves every year

– to the point it resembled twigs. I'd carefully bend the branches into shape, preparing it for the magic to come – the decorations.

Betty's decorations box was a mish mash of collected Christmas ornaments from the 1940s-1980s, the almond lights (always tangled), weird pasta decorations we made for her at preschool and so – much – tinsel. Every decoration was precious to me. My sister and I spent hours decorating the tree with Betty watching on, cup of tea in hand.

Then there was the bell. The pink aluminium bell that would be hung from the doorway and, if you pulled the cord, would play very twinkly Christmas carols. Only we were never allowed to pull the cord... because kids break things... making it even more special.

As for the other most important part of Christmas – enter Betty's Christmas trifle. I'll be blunt, it wasn't known for being the tastiest trifle ever made, but it was on the dessert table every year, complete with bright yellow custard, red jelly, tinned peaches and those unmistakable supermarket sponge rolls soaked in cheap sherry. It was a bowl of Christmas right there.

So, this ridiculous cake is all of those things. An ode to my Christmas memories with Betty. Supermarket sponge roll (not carefully crafted cake) covered in Christmas tack.

Here's to you Betty Cherry. Thank you for a childhood filled with beautiful Christmas memories, all the Christmas tack anyone could need and the best Christmas tree I ever did see. *



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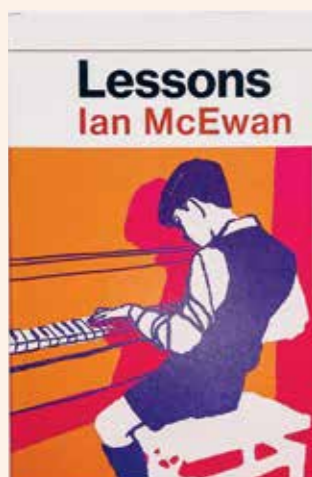
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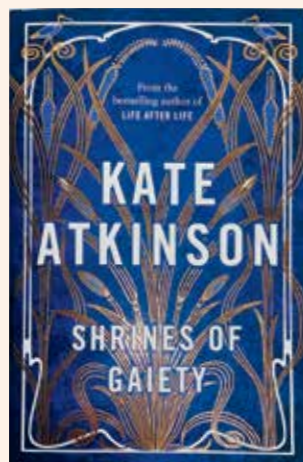
A COLLECTION OF FINE WORDS AND EXQUISITE LYRICS, REVIEWED BY THE FINE FOLKS AT ARMIDALE'S READER'S COMPANION.



1.



4.



2.



5.



3.



6.

UNPLUGGED WITH READER'S COMPANION

THE BOOKS...

1. LESSONS BY IAN MCEWAN

In this fantastic new novel by Ian McEwan (winner of the 1998 Booker Prize for his novel *Atonement*), he chronicles the life of Roland Baine. This is a deeply humane novel and looks at life through the prism of a very ordinary man.

Roland lives through many important stages of our history – the world for him, and us, is forever changing. At the core of life is the story of love, regret and the endless search for answers. Ian McEwan is one of my favourite authors, he has written 17 novels and we feature him heavily in our favourite section in store.

2. SHRINES OF GAIETY BY KATE ATKINSON

Nellie Coker is a notorious night club queen, based on the real life Kate Meyrick. She has several adult children who all star in this story, alongside detectives, gangsters, politicians, celebrities, dancing girls and a sweet, caring librarian from York.

Set in 1920s London, in the underbelly of Soho's gaiety in which it is so easy to become lost, *Shrines of Gaiety* has a fabulous twisting plot, with a fascinating backstory about librarian Miss Kelling who, looking for adventure, travels to London to locate and return two young runaway girls to York.

The story is funny, the many characters are beautifully developed, the plot line is continually turning, with a slapstick surprise at the end (you'll never guess). Atkinson has written many books, including the *Jackson Brodie* series (which has been adapted for a BBC series) and several stand alone books, two of which have been awarded the Costa Prize.

3. LIMBERLOST BY ROBBIE ARNOTT

I love this book. And I love my job, but I wished I could have just stayed at home to read it to the end in one long sitting. Author Robbie Arnott beautifully describes the Tasmanian countryside and the life of a young teenage boy, Ned.

Ned's brothers are away at war, his father and sister have worries that adults have, and he just wants to please the people in his life. One summer, Ned collects rabbit pelts in order to save for a small boat that will enable him to get out onto the river in front of his family's apple orchard, and sail to the river mouth. Ned's story unfolds over the decades and we see how the decisions he made that summer affect his life. As he ages, he vividly recalls that hot summer of his youth, his experiences on the water and the natural world that surrounded him. This story is full of kindness, blood ties and love.

THE MUSIC...

WHY VINYL?

Streaming music is convenient, but do you really listen? Are you skipping through songs? Are you letting the streaming services dictate how you feel? We love vinyl because it allows you to truly listen and appreciate the music. Come and check out our range of turntables and change the way you listen.

4. I'M FUN! – BEN LEE

Ben Lee returns with his 20th album *I'M FUN!* – released in August 2022. The compilation of songs is about growing up, celebrating being a weirdo and embracing positivity.

While his original plan to record with a live band became another victim of the pandemic, Ben instead made the album remotely. Producers included Jon Brion, Shamir, Sadie Dupuis and Darren Seltmann and guests Zoëy Deschanel, Christian Lee Hutson, Money Mark (Beastie Boys), Megan Washington, Georgia Maq and Eric D Johnson.

5. TALK MEMORY – BADBADNOTGOOD

With nods to the likes of Miles Davis and Pharoah Sanders, this inventive Canadian band sets aside its affinity for hip-hop and kindles a love of classic jazz. BADBADNOTGOOD deconstructs classic sounds, peers at their components and rebuilds them with their own original parts.

The velvety play and mildly psychedelic grooves are still present, but *Talk Memory* is also the band's most compositionally complex record to date. It draws you in with vibrant hooks and melodic flourishes, then begs you to return and fully absorb its subtleties.

6. A VERY LONELY SOLSTICE – FLEET FOXES

Right after New York City shut down in the winter of 2020, Robin Pecknold played a livestream concert at the historic St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church in Brooklyn that he called *A Very Lonely Solstice*. Many bands are starting to emerge from lockdown with quiet, understated pandemic albums. *Solstice* is an excellent entry in this genre; it's mellow without being sad, strong without being strident and reassuring without being cloying. Pecknold has musically preserved in amber the quiet sense of hope that kept us holding on through quarantine. *

Reader's Companion – WORDS AND SOUND
124 Beardy Street, Armidale
readerscompanion.com.au
@readerscompanion

2020 VISION

OUR TOP REASONS FOR YOUNG HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO CHOOSE RURAL PRACTICE.

Kate Darley and Trent Irwin, who grew up in regional NSW, were among the minority of students keen to pursue a career in regional optometry. Now they're bringing the best the industry has to offer to their hometowns as the co-owners and managers of the independently owned Brennan & Smith stores across Armidale, Inverell, Glen Innes and Tenterfield.

1. LOVE WHAT YOU DO

Kate: If you're passionate about your business, if it's something your whole mind, body and soul is behind, it will do well. Not only will your team notice it, your clients will too. Both Trent and I grew up in this region, we went away to study optometry and were the only two people in our university cohorts to put our hands up for a regional life and career. We were thrilled to have the opportunity to return home and offer the very best level of optometry across our four locations of Armidale, Inverell, Glen Innes and Tenterfield.

2. GIVE YOUR TEAM A VOICE

Trent: Your employees are the foundation of your business and we're fortunate to have an incredible team – they're a huge part of our success. We have regular team meetings to ensure everyone is on the same page and openly analyse not only our staff, but also ourselves as bosses. We look at what we're doing individually and ask our staff what we can do differently to improve the vibe and functionality of the workplace. It's crucial we give them that voice, keep the lines of communication open at all times and show them how much we value their feedback.

3. BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK

Trent: Being regionally based enables us to forge strong working relationships with a range of specialists, right here on our doorstep – including general practitioners and other allied health professionals. For example, if we diagnose someone who's had a stroke in their eye, we can pick up the phone and discuss the next best steps with their doctor on the spot. We have driven our patients to hospital and arranged emergency transport to Sydney. Having the right support network in place and connecting with other people in our industry enables us to offer a holistic, high level of care when it's needed most.

4. CELEBRATE SUSTAINABILITY

Kate: A client of ours once told us they were disappointed to see we were operating with coated paper bags, because it meant we weren't sustainable. So we did our research, checked the sums and switched to reusable calico bags. A lot of our frames also come with eco inserts too – that means the materials used to make them are biodegradable, with the frames often being made from materials like cotton fibres or wood. We encourage the slow fashion movement – if people invest in a higher quality frame, it will last longer and we can reuse the frame should their lenses needed to be updated in the future.

5. CATER FOR ALL WALKS OF LIFE

Kate: We're very proud of our products and ensure we cater for traditional styles right through to sought-after, high-end fashion frames from Paris and Milan. In fact, one day, Alan Hollebrandse (aka The Piefather for readers of issue one) walked in one day with a photo of a pair of glasses he'd spotted on a recent European holiday. He asked if it was possible to track them down – better yet, we were able to pick the exact pair up from our own shelf in that very moment.

6. INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY

Trent: As an independently owned business, every decision we make is our own – whether that's choosing from an unrestricted range of products, working closely with suppliers to pass on any discounts and promotions back to our patients, or investing in the best diagnostic equipment. We hand select the equipment we buy so we can offer the patient the best possible examination right here in a regional location. Why should people have to travel to metropolitan areas for a higher level of care? That's why we invest wisely, because it's not just about a pair of glasses, it's about providing our community with optimum eye health and achieving the best long-term outcome for them and their vision.

7. EDUCATE YOUR STAFF

Trent: Optometry is quite a complex industry, people think it's just glasses and lenses, but it's a very technical process and is quite scientific. It can take some time to fully grasp the concepts behind the profession, that's why we invest in our staff. When we identify the right people, we finance their skills, training and development to become fully qualified dispensers. One of the best investments you can ever make in your business is your staff, so if you're willing to pay for coursework and expand their knowledge, they're going to return that investment back to the business in full.

8. SUPPORT LOCAL

Kate: We're members of the local business chambers and take great pride in our region and want to offer support in any way we can, that includes sponsoring a lot of community events and local sporting teams. We also regularly take our services to nursing homes, so those unable to physically access eye health care have high-level eye care brought to them as a community health care provider. We host style nights where we collaborate with our suppliers and other local businesses to showcase the latest styles on offer. Of course, we buy local wines on those nights too! *



BE OUR Guest



GUEST ROOM



SWIMMING POOL

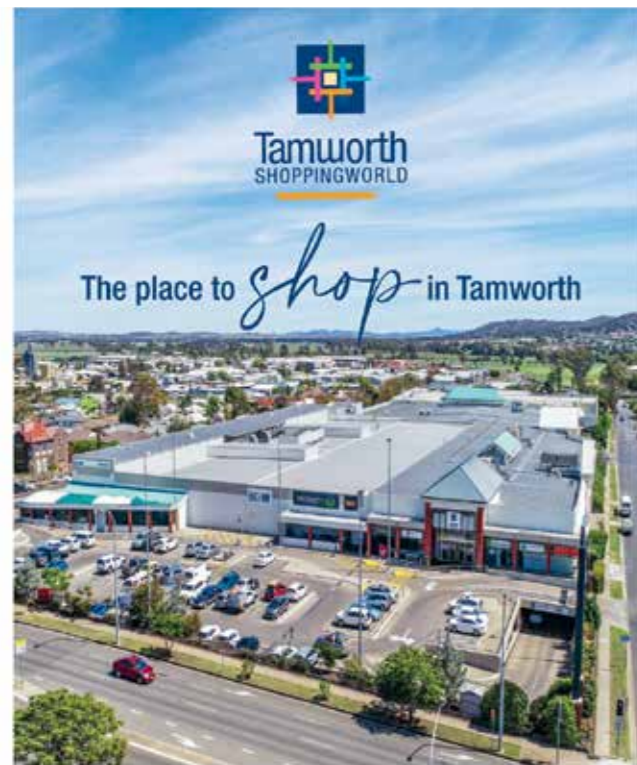


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TALES FROM THE BAR

WITH JACK 'JACKO' STOCKER

NEW ENGLAND BREWING CO, URALLA

"It was a dark and stormy night, the rain was coming down pretty hard. Little did we know a b-double truck had just plowed into a house in Uralla, taking the powerlines down with it. There we were, running around trying to figure out why we'd had a blackout, and of course the customers turn into little school children, as if we'd just flicked the lights out at assembly. Chaos was kicking in and this thing is dragging on. We're thinking we're going to have to shut down the bar because we don't have a till. Then one of our customers tells us he's got a mate who's got a generator we could borrow, to get things back online.

"So the boss tells me to hop in my ute, go out to the property, get the generator and come back. So I do that. I get back, pull up next to the brewery and the boss walks out and

says: 'What the f#@k is this?!'

"It was a rarely seen type of homemade generator and lawnmower all in one! Dodgy as you know what!

"So now we're standing in the back of the ute, in the pouring rain, trying to get this generator to turn over. We're pulling and pulling and the humour is running dry – until Andy, one of our great locals jumps up on the ute, looks down and gives it one last try. Power!

"We're elated.

"We're cheering.

"Then the power and lights come back on." *

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