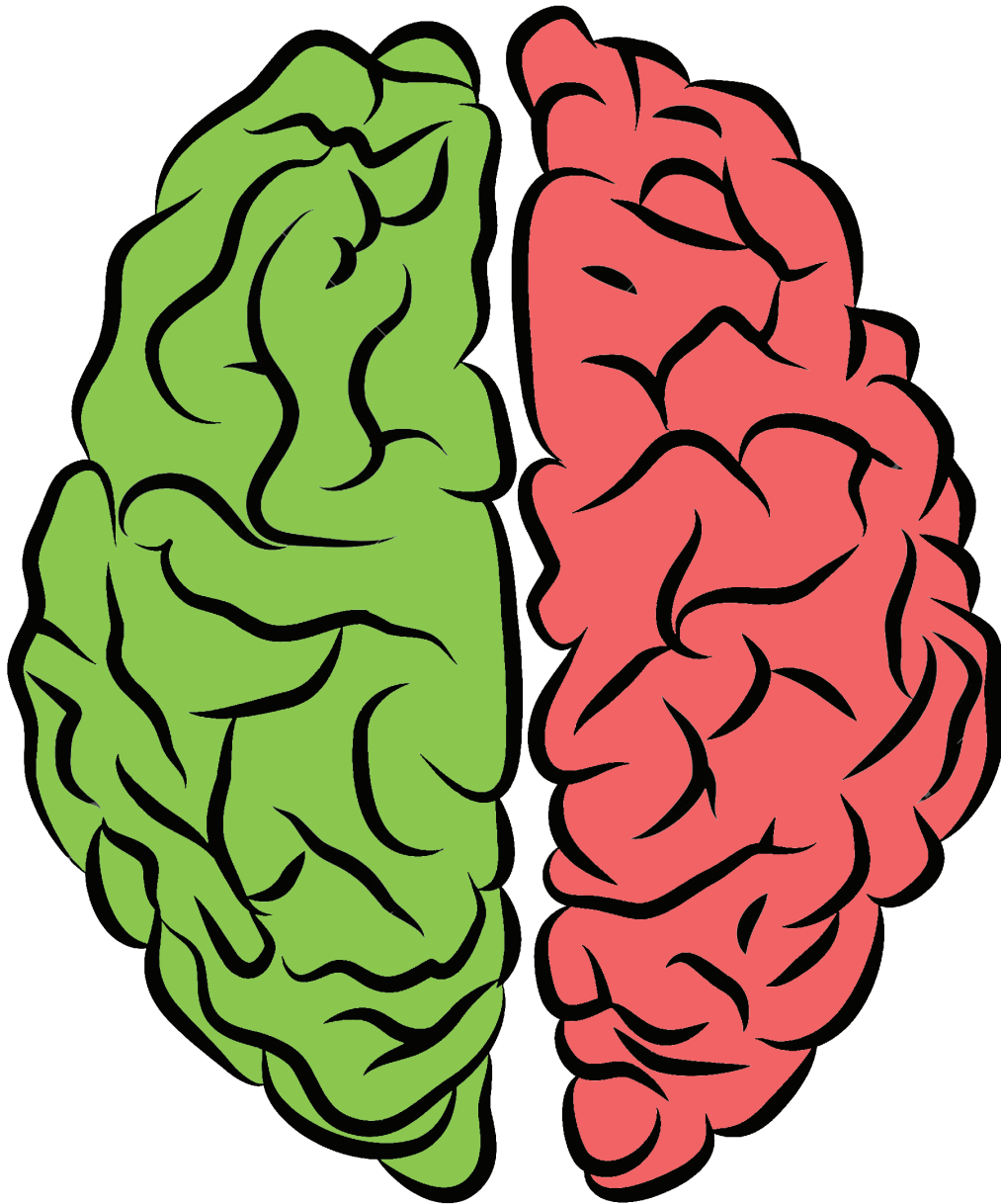


# Newtown News

August 2018



“Lefties rule!”

Brought to you by the Newtown Community & Cultural Centre

# *Kia Ora Newtown*

Kia Ora all,

Yay! It's August. It's such a great month, and filled with historical importance. It was on the 22nd of August that the Loch Ness Monster was first spotted by St. Columba. In 2015, August was the 52nd most popular name in Sweden. August's official flower is the gladiolus and its birthstone is the peridot. Let's hope these useless facts help you out at your next pub quiz!

More importantly though, August is also pretty great because it's my birthday. I'm one of those people who try to drag out a birthday for a good solid week (sorry, not sorry) and I dig having a day all about me, so do feel free to stop in and celebrate my orbit around the sun.

In other big news around the centre, we're moving forward with the 'Our Town, Newtown' project, where the Wellington City Council has allocated \$3.4 million to upgrade WCC-owned, Newtown Community Centre-run community facilities in Newtown. It's pretty exciting to think how shiny and more functional our spaces could be.

We really want to hear what you have to say and what you think, so coming along to the workshops and keeping up to date with the process are things I'd definitely encourage. You can meet the architectural team and get the goss on the project so far on page 7.

On the page opposite this, Mhairi McGregor chats to Robbie Neilson and gets the lowdown on this awesome local and his life. We are also celebrating International Left Handers Day in August, so turn to the middle spread to learn all about 'lefties' with a great article from Sian Smith.

The Newtown History Files from Chris Rabey are back on page 6 and we're also excited to publish a local cartoon from first-time contributor 'Snibbo' - let us know what you think.

Other than my birthday (did I mention it already?) there's loads of cool things taking place in Newtown in August. Just turn this zine over and check out the back page to find out 'What's the Happs?'...

As always, I hope you're all well and warm.

Ngā mihi,

Eryn Gribble

[newtowns.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:newtowns.newsletter@gmail.com)

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# Notorious NEWTowner

*Learning to live “with an open heart” has opened many doors in life for man-about-Newtown Robbie Neilson. Mhairi McGregor met Robbie at Baobab to find out what makes him tick...*



Growing up on a sheep station in rural Whanganui, Robbie enjoyed a happy childhood mucking around the farm, travelling to horse shows with his family and spending lots of time with his cousins. He was also really into drawing and comics as a kid.

Robbie then had a horrific time at boarding school in Palmerston North, refusing to conform to the archaic hierarchical system and the “rugby-heads on speed” stereotype of the other boarders, before heading to Wellington to study.

Robbie loved university life, particularly socialising, philosophising, and getting involved with the environmental and the LGBT+ groups. He also enjoyed drawing cartoons for student magazine Salient and had his 15 mins of fame as one half of “The Joggers”, regularly running through campus in 70’s tennis gear!

After uni, Robbie travelled for a year through South America, Japan and Europe, cheekily taking “nude scenic photos” in every country he visited. After returning to NZ he fell into depression and eventually moved back to Wellington where he delved into massage, yoga, meditation and the healing arts.

“I came to realise that I had created a safe bubble in Wellington and that I would need to step out and face some dark depths of the soul. It scared me sh\*tless, but I went for it”. So Robbie set out into the world on a spiritual mission. Travelling through France, Canada, Mexico and Guatemala WWOOFing - and becoming the cliché of “finding yourself” - he discovered and experienced wonderful things, forever changed.

Robbie then returned to the family farm and spent a difficult three years working as “the most paradoxical vegetarian sheep farmer in the district!” before starting a relationship with Renee Rushton of the Newtown Community Centre on a trip to Wellington to visit friends.

“Eventually I made the brutally-hard decision to abandon the family to live and love with Renee in Newtown”.

In 2016 Robbie moved down to Wellington with his dog Bangarang and has been working as a Teaching Assistant with high learning needs kids at Berhampore School. He is also studying to be a web developer and hopes to one day combine his interests by teaching tech in schools. In his spare time, Robbie’s all over Newtown and loves it!

“I’ve been involved with the Newtown Festival waste team, Kaibosh and the Community Centre and their many events”.

Robbie also loves the Newtown Tool Library, Worker Bee Oasis, Boomerang Bags and the Wash Against Waste projects.

And his final words?

“Moving here was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. I find many of my friends to be incredibly inspiring community heroes. Newtown is spoiled for great talent!”

# *To the left, to the left*

*by Sian Smith*

Southpaw. Portsider. Sinister. Witch. Lefty. If you or anyone you know has been referred to in such terms you might just understand why on August 13 we celebrate International Left Handers Day, acknowledging our left-handed brothers and sisters who cope each day in a world designed for a 90% right-handed majority. I must confess to my own right-handed privilege, as I hold my son in my left arm, typing with my right hand. Woe betide me if I attempted to switch it around: I dare say this article would make little sense to you, dear Newtown readers. Years ago working as a barista, I used to challenge myself to rely on my left hand when pouring coffee shots, hoping to harness the power of ambidexterity. Long story short, my pursuit for power proved difficult and, needless to say, sustaining burns in a busy café was not going to bring home the bacon. Regardless of this self-imposed problem, a coffee machine is slightly more left-hand-user-friendly than other everyday objects that most of us right handers take for granted. Scissors, guitars, ballpoint pens – all objects that left-handed people need to either struggle with or bust out the big bucks to buy inverted products through specialist left-hand traders. Ned Flanders, if only we could find your Leftorium in any local mall.

Considering left-handedness a quirk of the creatively-inclined goes deeper than material difference. The word sinister derives from the Latin word for 'left', meaning weak or abnormal. Historically, left-handed people faced centuries of discrimination where those in power believed the trait to be a sign of religious, physical and moral deficiency. In the Salem witch trials of Massachusetts during the 1600s, left-handed women were more likely to face accusation, due to the supposed devil's association with God's left-hand side. As if the rude remarks weren't enough! The industrial revolution also made things complicated, introducing machinery designed for righties. As a result, right handers saw left-handedness as unfavourable from a functional perspective. People started to train babies to use their right hands over their left, with some schools using physical restraint upon children who wrote with their left hands.

Scientists today still search for the reason behind left-hand dominance. Since the late 20th century, research commonly associated left-handedness with the right side of the brain, however more recent studies suggest a genetic link. In 2012 a study at Northwestern University linked the trait with evolution, suggesting left-handedness came about through social adaptation. Accordingly, right-handedness correlates to the cooperation of the social majority, and the left minority to competition. In 2013, research at the University of Oxford linked left-handedness with the gene PCSK6 while at the University of Auckland, researchers proposed the connection of the right hand to gestures in language. However, just last year a study through Ruhr University Bochum in Germany found the asymmetry of genes in the spinal cord may provide us with greater understanding of the trait's association with epigenetics – changes in gene expression. The dominance of the left or right hand in a human foetus is determined as early as eight weeks, with babies suckling on the dominant hand around week thirteen. The movement of the hands derives in the motor cortex of the brain, which does not fuse with the spinal cord until the fifteenth week of development. Hence, the trait is determined before the brain is in control.

The theory that competition is linked with lefties seems right on, considering the vast array of highly influential left-handed people throughout history. Despite all of history's right hand smack downs, left-handed people have contributed greatly toward art (Leonardo Da Vinci, Picasso, Michelangelo, M.C. Escher, Rembrandt), music (Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Beethoven), literature (Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, Franz Kafka, H. G. Wells), popular culture (Marilyn Monroe, Keanu Reeves, Judy Garland, Tina Fey, Carol Burnett, Matt Groening, Greta Garbo, Natalie Cole, Isaac Hayes, Jean Paul Gaultier, Oprah Winfrey), science (Marie Curie, Albert Einstein), global leadership (Joan of Arc, Winston Churchill, J. Edgar Hoover, John F. Kennedy, Barack Obama) and unprecedented human endeavour (Neil Armstrong, Helen Keller). How then do we explain the exceptional nature of so many left-handed folks? Even in the 21st century, more work is required to solve the 'sinister' mystery that is the lefty.





Photo credit:  
The Granger Collection, New York

*“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.”*

Marie Curie



Photo credit:  
Ashley Gilbertson / VII Photo

*“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”*

Barack Obama



Photo credit:  
20th Century Fox

*“Why me, Lord? Where have I gone wrong? I’ve always been nice to people! I don’t drink or dance or swear! I’ve even kept kosher, just to be on the safe side. I’ve done everything the Bible says, even the stuff that contradicts the other stuff! What more could I do?”*

Ned Flanders

# Newtown History Files

## Early development of the Newtown trams

By Chris Rabey

The City Council's Public Works Committee was asked in 1877 to form the sides of Adelaide Road so that a tramway could be laid in the middle. This forming work was completed in December. The first steam tram engines arrived in July 1878, making the first trial runs - carting dignitaries - on 12 August.

On opening day, the 24th, the terminus and tramshed at the foot of Adelaide Road were gaily decorated with flags and evergreens, and a number of long tables "groaning with all the delicacies of the season" were placed in the sheds. The directors intended to entertain about 200 guests (who were at the time still proceeding through the town) at a grand banquet in honour of the event.

The following year, the tram lines were extended to the 3-year old Newtown Hotel (after which the suburb was named), on the corner of Constable and Revans Street (soon to be renamed Riddiford Street), with the first tram running up the extension on 10 November 1879. At almost 2 miles, this work over-extended the Wellington Tramway Company and the service generally proved not as profitable as hoped, so the operation was sold to merchant E W Mills in 1880.

To reduce his overheads, Mills soon relegated the five steam locos and put horses on all services. The engine shed was converted to stables, and in 1888 was enlarged to hold 140 horses.





## *Introducing the architects*

The Wellington City Council (WCC) has allocated \$3.4 million to upgrade the Newtown Community & Cultural Centre, Network Newtown and Newtown Hall on Daniell Street. The Newtown Residents' Association, the Community Centre and the WCC are working together to ensure the people of Newtown are at the centre of deciding what these community facilities will look like.

Over the last year a lot of work has been put into seeking out your opinions, ideas and dreams for a community facility upgrade for Newtown and we've now hired an architectural team from WSP Opus. We'd love to introduce them to you...

**Cushla Thurston** lives in South Wellington and has two young children who attend an early education centre in Newtown. Her previous work includes a \$13 million redevelopment of Heretaunga College in Upper Hutt, a \$4 million Performing Arts Auditorium for Sacred Heart College in Lower Hutt and the Master Planning for Wellington East Girls' College currently under construction. Cushla will be the Project Architect and the main point of contact for the Newtown Community Facilities project.

**Bruce Curtain** has 25 years' experience as a Principal Architect and is our National Technical Director - Architecture. He has extensive project experience that is diverse and technically complex. Bruce's projects include significant redevelopment projects at Wellington East Girls' College, Heretaunga and Porirua Colleges, and the multi-award winning Carterton Events Centre. Bruce is passionate about innovation and sustainability and carries this passion into all the projects he is involved with.

**Carinnya Feaunati** is an Architectural graduate with a passion for the sustainable development of communities. She recently represented New Zealand at the Young Pacific Leaders Conference in Hawaii, and has also presented at the COP21 UNESCO Conference in Paris. Her consultation experience includes working with a community in the Naval Base suburb of Baguio in the Philippines, commonly known for its slum housing and lack of adequate amenities. Carinnya is looking forward to bringing her skills in understanding community needs and working with people from different cultural backgrounds to the Newtown project.

Now that we are in the design phase, following on from our July workshop, there will be a further two workshops with the community this year:

**Workshop 2** – 8th September: testing concept designs.

**Workshop 3** – October/November TBC: final concept design and feedback.

Members of the community can also provide feedback between workshops on the project boards at the Newtown Community & Cultural Centre and Kia Ora Newtown. You can also keep up to date with the project on Facebook at either the Newtown Community & Cultural Centre's page or Wellington City Council's page.

More information is also available online at [www.newtowncommunity.org.nz/our-town-newtown.htm](http://www.newtowncommunity.org.nz/our-town-newtown.htm) or <https://newtown.org.nz>



# *What's the Happs?*

**At the Newtown Community & Cultural Centre, corner Rintoul & Colombo Streets, Newtown**

## **Women's Self Defence Class**

Are you sick of walking home with your keys jammed between your fingers? Sign up for this women's self defence class and learn some skills to get yourself home safely. Wear loose comfortable clothing and bring a water bottle. Please register your name and contact number by calling 027 212 0672. Saturday 18 August, 12 noon-4pm.

## **Newtown Crop Swap**

Crop Swap is happening Saturday 11 August (and repeating every 2nd Saturday of the month). Bring surplus or homemade kitchen/garden goods, any amount welcome! Items like garden produce, plants, seeds, ferments/preserves, baking, bread and meals are all great. Crop Swap is a place to share resources and meet others in the community. Contact [cropswapnewtown@gmail.com](mailto:cropswapnewtown@gmail.com) or visit 'Newtown Crop Swap' on Facebook for more details. The swap must happen at 10am, so please arrive by 9.45am. Koha for room hire.

## **Argentine Tango**

Tango has arrived in Newtown! Beginner classes started on Monday 16 July and are now running weekly. No need to bring a partner. \$10/class. Mondays, 5.30-6.30pm. Contact Susan on 027 733 8622 or Irina on 021 427 136 for more information.

## **Quick Kai**

We've got a freezer full of ready to "heat and eat" meals here at the Newtown Community Centre. Get yourself a cheap, tasty and healthy pre-prepared home cooked meal, and take away the stress of slaving over that hot stove! Stop by the Centre during our office hours (9am-4.30pm, Mon-Fri) and grab a meal from our freezer. There's a huge range from thai green curry to chunky minestrone soup. Gluten free and vegan available. Meals cost \$6 for members of the public. If you are a Timebank member it'll only cost \$3 and 1 x time credit.

## **Boomerang Bags Newtown**

Boomerang Bags Newtown is all about getting rid of plastic bags in Newtown by upcycling waste fabric destined for the landfill into reusable shopping bags for everyone. Join us for our fortnightly sewing bee - just bring your lovely selves, your sewing machines (if you have one), scissors, irons and some sweet tunes along. Next bees are 9 and 23 August, 5.30-7.30pm. Stay in touch and find out more at the FB group: [facebook.com/boomerangbagsnewtown](https://facebook.com/boomerangbagsnewtown)

## **'Our Town, Newtown' - Streaming ahead with concept designs**

Building on the success of the first idea-gathering workshop with our fantastic architects WSP Opus, this next workshop is where things will start to get even more exciting! WSP Opus will be presenting some concept designs for the community to review. This event is not until September, but get it in your calendars early. Mark down Saturday 8 September, probably from 12 noon-3pm.

## **An Evening with Mediums**

Featuring Graham Sim "The Scottish Psychic", Kazz Sim "The Cockney Clairvoyant" and New Zealand's own Darryl Steedman. These mediums will deliver messages of love, guidance and support from the spirit world and all loved ones who reside there. There will be a question and answer session on anything of a spiritual or holistic nature, with all three mediums being available to give their own individual perspectives based on their unique experiences. Contact Graham at [gks.holism@yahoo.com](mailto:gks.holism@yahoo.com) to reserve tickets, or purchase on the door. Doors open 6.45pm on Friday 24 August and the show runs until 9pm.

## **At Newtown Hall, 71 Daniell Street, Newtown**

## **Yoga in Japanese**

Keen to do some yoga in Japanese? Head along to Newtown Hall on Mondays 6 & 20 August and Friday 17 August from 10.30-11.30am. Please wear comfortable clothes, bring water and a mat (some provided). \$12/class.