



PROMETHEUS PROFILE

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The Gaiety Theatre, Wairoa

In early April of this year Geoff and Ali Hole approached Prometheus for a loan to enable them to buy out their business partner's share of the old Gaiety Theatre in Wairoa. Geoff and Ali were keen to buy the building outright so they could pursue their dream of re-establishing a picture theatre in Wairoa.

The Gaiety was Wairoa's first cinema, with the current cinema being a 1932 rebuild after the original was destroyed by fire in 1931. It closed as a cinema several decades ago, giving way finally to the demographic and cultural changes of that time.

Geoff has had a long-standing interest in cinema and the arts, and once having set his heart on the notion of restoring and re-opening The Gaiety, he and his wife Ali conducted extensive market research in similar NZ towns to assess the viability of their vision. Their research suggested this was a project with a very good chance of success. (Movie-going has undergone something of a resurgence throughout the 90's with a number of cinemas successfully established in small towns throughout New Zealand.)

As well as refurbishing the picture theatre the project includes opening an art gallery and café in the shop front of the building to compliment the theatre. As for the theatre itself, the screen will be retractable so the auditorium can double for live performances and stage shows as it used to in the early days.

This project has attracted substantial support from the local community, both in terms of restoration work as well as financial support through local shareholding in a soon-to-be-formed theatre company. Prometheus will also be supporting this final stage, which involves equipping the theatre with modern projection and sound equipment as well as fitting it out with seating and all the other accessories needed for a fully functioning picture house. If all goes according to plan, movies will be showing again in Wairoa before Christmas, for the first time in decades.

Koanga Gardens & the Kohatu Toa Eco-Village

Koanga Gardens is a seed preservation and propagation Trust that has, for the past 16 years, been collecting and growing old fruit trees, vegetables and flowers. It was established by Kay Baxter out of concern for the frightening speed with which seed varieties were becoming extinct in New Zealand.

The key aims of the Koanga Gardens Trust are to establish and maintain a collection of New Zealand heirloom plants (along with records of their history and culture) and to ensure their survival and availability for future generations as a resource for cultivation and genetic diversity. They also aim to promote the collection as

Toanga (treasured heritage) and to establish and maintain an educational resource and research centre where people learn to garden with heirloom plants.



To further these aims the Trust runs a mail-order catalogue service for members and holds regular workshops (including permaculture workshops) on their land just north of Kaiwaka.

To date the Trust has operated on land owned by Trustees Bob Corker and Kay Baxter. As the trust has grown and become more solidly-based over the years, Bob and Kay have felt a need to establish it on its own foundation and see the Trust as future owner of the land on which it is established.

As part of the process toward this goal Bob and Kay have been working to transform their farm into the Kohatu Toa Eco-village. This has involved a process of subdivision of the farm, bringing in new roading, power and water

supplies. The developing Eco-village has 7 main lots, with six of these for private dwellings and the seventh for the Koanga Trust gardens. The remainder of the farm is common land (over 90 acres) for use by village residents under a co-owners agreement.

In order to complete the subdivision work Bob and Kay approached Prometheus for finance and we were pleased to support them in this process.

The transformation is progressing smoothly with nearly all of the subdivision work completed and quite a bit of the house-building well-advanced. (All except one of the private plots in the Eco-village are sold.) If you feel inspired by the vision behind this project and would like to become a member of the Trust (or would like to explore the possibility of becoming a participant in the Eco-village) you can contact Bob and Kay by either writing to them c/- Koanga Gardens RD 2 Maungaturoto, or ringing (09) 4312 900 for further information.

The Udda Option

"Looking to the stars, we fail to see the flowers at our feet".

This saying proved apt when Tracey Steele, a qualified Naturopath and medical herbalist, developed an ointment for an ailing cow using herbs that were growing in paddocks surrounding the cows' grazing area.

The ointment was formulated as a result of a plea from Tracey's Aunt, a farmer in Taranaki. One of her cows had severe black mastitis which affects the cow's udders. The condition was so bad that it had spread down the cow's legs as well.

Using the historical "wise woman's" herbal premise that herbs found in the vicinity of the ailing animal will hold the remedy for a cure, Tracey gathered Manuka, Calendula, Chickweed and Red Clover from paddocks in the area. She then added a few other herbs to create an ointment she has called Skin-eeze. The same ointment is also sold specifically for the treatment which led to its creation, under the brand name "The Udda Option".

"The herbs were double-boiled for six hours then added to a lanolin and oil base", says Tracey. "We then applied the ointment to the cow's udder twice a day. After a few days the udder was clear and the diseased skin peeled off leaving new pink skin. After a week all four quarters of the udder were tested clear and milking resumed".

Other farmers in the area heard about these results and have since queued up to try it on their own cattle. Their ointment has contributed to significant positive improvement for a range of udder diseases.

"Lumpy milk and hard udders are symptoms of a diseased udder", says Tracey, "and we found the cream particularly effective if it was applied early to these conditions".

Skin-eeze has also proven effective in the treatment of human ailments such as eczema, cold sores, dermatitis, infected wounds and athlete's foot. "The worst kinds of skin ailments have cleared up after using Skin-eeze", reports Tracey. However, as she also notes, it is difficult to make categorical claims without the backing of clinical trials "but we do have very good testimonials".

Up until recently Tracey was making the cream herself from her home-based business "Pure Health". However, in response to growing demand and with the aid of a loan from Prometheus, her ointment is now manufactured at a laboratory and will be available in an increasing number of Health shops in the near future.

The next step for Tracey and "Pure Health" is to seek further financial backing to take the product one step further and have it registered.

For further information about the product, or for those interested in contributing financially to this new business, you can write to Tracey at PO Box 17257, Greenlane, Auckland.

Epicurean Supplies

The organic and gourmet restaurant supplier, Epicurean Supplies Ltd, has been a long-standing client of Prometheus. A recently negotiated fourth loan enabled the construction of a large "Woolaway" packing shed which will be used for produce sorting and processing.

Owner, Clyde Potter, reports that the business has continued to grow steadily from its inception 9 years ago. Of late, however, that growth has meant that it has proven increasingly difficult to effectively manage the throughput of both organic vegetables and herbs, as well as specialist restaurant supplies, within the existing facilities. This loan is just the latest in a series that has helped Epicurean expand its ability to meet the demand for organic produce in NZ restaurants.

Huiarangi Free Range Eggs

A client of some 4 years standing, Huiarangi Free Range has experienced strong growth in demand over recent years, particularly from supermarkets. In order to meet that demand effectively, Ian and Lesley Thomas approached Prometheus earlier this year with an application for a loan which would allow them to run a larger flock of hens.

Given their performance in regard to the previous loan and the growing impact they are having in penetrating the retail egg market with a more humane alternative, we were pleased to arrange the necessary finance.

Prometheus News

There have been significant developments at Prometheus since our last "Profile" in April this year.

The first of these was the re-writing, re-designing and re-printing of all our main publicity documents, including our "investing in the future" introductory brochure, our "banking with heart" account application pamphlet and our "lending with forethought" loan application guide. Any clients who are interested in receiving copies of the new brochure or pamphlets should give us a call and we'll be happy to send them.

We have also redesigned and printed our promotion postcards and are in the process of distributing these. If you know of any retail or other outlets which would be happy to display any of the above material on behalf of Prometheus, please get in touch.



By far the largest task, however, has been the designing and implementation of a new computer software package from Argos Financial Systems in Christchurch. This new software allows us to integrate all our client accounts, general ledger and mailing data into one system. The new system has been run parallel to the previous one for the past three months, is operating smoothly and is fully Year 2000 compliant.

The new team is working well together and all are enjoying the positive working relationships that have developed. Our new colleague, Terry Creighton, has settled in well and is pleased to be part of the team.

Over the past four months we have all put more time into getting out and about to raise Prometheus' profile by attending conferences and seminars on issues related to our core objectives. While Ton has focussed on visiting clients in the South Island, Gypsy and Terry have, between them, attended the Sustainable Energy Forum Conference, the COMMACT Conference on Community Banking, the Reclaiming APEC and Alternatives to APEC Conferences and the Opportunity Seminar on Micro-Finance (hosted by the TEAR Fund and the Tindall Foundation). Promotions material was disseminated at these conferences, some very good contacts were made and Terry gave a well-received presentation at the Opportunity Seminar.

Finally, at our AGM in July we said goodbye to longstanding Director and Chair, Alastair Munro, and expressed our appreciation for his very positive contribution over that time. We also elected as a new Director, Kevin Lyons, whom some readers may know from his earlier work as Bursar at the Rudolf Steiner School Hastings. We are very pleased to welcome Kevin with his experience in financial management and his strong personal interest in ethical issues.

Solar Energy

We reported in the last profile that Prometheus had entered into a partnership with Greenpeace and Synergex, with part-funding from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA), to provide interest free loans to purchasers of Solahart hot water systems. It was initially intended that this arrangement would allow 50 households to convert to solar hot water. However, due to additional funding from EECA and strong demand from consumers Prometheus made 74 loans for a total of \$345,125.

As noted in EECA's "energy saver fund" Newsletter, this package addressed one of the main barriers to greater take-up of the solar energy option by New Zealanders, namely, the up-front capital purchase price. The solar units make good economic, as well as environmental, sense. Savings on the electricity bill of 40-50% (depending on the number of members in the household) soon make a significant contribution to repaying the initial capital cost.

The only down-side to this exercise from our point of view is that we weren't able to offer this opportunity to more people. We were restricted in this by the availability of the financial support from EECA's energy saver fund. As we understand it, that fund has now been fully allocated, although the Energy Efficiency Bill introduced to Parliament by Green Party co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons does seek to re-establish it.

We are hoping that we will be able to offer attractive loan packages for solar heating, in partnership with Synergex, again in the near future.

Genetic Experimentation



The latest issue of "Soil & Health" magazine has focused loudly and clearly on the GE debate under the title "The GE Issue". The magazine's staff, together with RAGE and Physicians and Scientists for Responsible Genetics, have gathered contributions from over twenty scientists, ethicists, organic growers, politicians and consumers. Editor, Valerie Cowperthwaite, says that it is time to "draw the line in the sand", asserting that society doesn't want science to be put up to the highest bidder.

"The GE Issue" asks the question, "Do we want human genes in our food chain?" It highlights many of the myths perpetrated by scientists and pro big-business U.S. politicians.

Our own politicians have been saying that genetic engineering is simply speeding up the natural process. This does not explain how human genes get into sheep. "The GE Issue" notes that to allow one farmer to grow GE crops will deny organic growers their right to grow an uncontaminated, certifiable crop. "The GE Issue" demands that an ethical debate takes place. It highlights a government report which advises that scientists are not qualified to make social judgements as to what is "safe" - the only people so qualified are ordinary citizens as a whole, who will ultimately be the ones affected by such decisions.

Brendan Hoare, President of Soil & Health, notes that New Zealand stands at the threshold of a window of opportunity; our geographic isolation affords us a unique opportunity to embrace a GE-Free environment, continue the growing transition to organics, and allow more of our farmers to receive premium prices for our farm produce. Going down the GE road will mean that farmers remain price takers while more of our gene pool will be controlled under patents held by the multi-national "bio-technology" companies. This issue demands attention from anyone concerned about the future quality of our food and our environment.

You can contact RAGE by writing to 121 Russell Street, PO Box 1109, Hastings, phone 06 870 9920.