

2 MINUTES WITH Derek Thresh

In terms of Tawa, Derek Thresh has two “claims to fame”. He is one of a small grouping of local nonagenarians, having turned 92 last August. And he is one of an elite number who has lived in Tawa for more than 50 years. In his case it is more than 60 years, having built his house in Taylor Tce in 1958. It used to be called Earp Tce but “nobody liked that, so they changed it.” Derek’s was one of the first houses there, adjoining the Zande farm. The motorway north of Johnsonville was just being constructed, with Middleton Road through Glenside still the main highway north. He has certainly seen a lot of change in his time here!



Where were you born?

Pembroke Dock, south Wales. My father was a major in the East Lancashire Regiment and was posted there at the time.

Where did you grow up?

In Bradford, West Yorkshire mostly. Also in Lancashire.

Where were you educated?

I went to Crumlyn Technical College in South Wales.

How long have you lived in Tawa?

Since 1958. I arrived in Wellington that year and lived a few months in Newtown initially.

What do you like about Tawa?

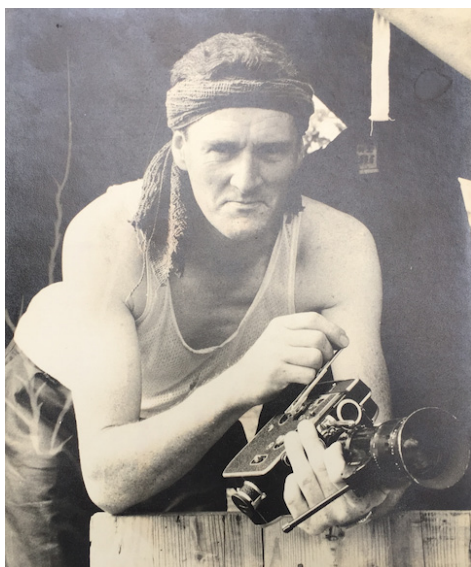
It’s a good place and very handy to most things. You don’t need to go into the city for anything. Porirua has it all. Parking is good here and free. It’s a quiet place except for some hoons in our street.

What about family?

I have been married to Noeline for 33 years. My first wife, Kay, a teacher at Tawa School, was unfortunately killed in a car accident in Australia in 1984. I spent four months in hospital in Canberra as a result of that.

Work experience over the years

I had been in the London Fire Brigade before coming out to New Zealand in 1951. I lived with my parents on Auckland’s North Shore initially and joined the Police. I wore my helmet “on the beat” in Queen Street. For a short time I was in charge of Waiheke Island while the local constable was on holiday. In 1958 I was transferred with the Police to Wellington, and went into the Criminal Registration branch (the “fingerprint branch”).



My ‘Rambo’ picture
– taken in Nui-dat, Vietnam

I left the Police in 1963 and joined the Army, having the opportunity of taking over their photographic section. I spent the rest of my working life in that role. It took me to quite a few places including Egypt, Singapore and Canada, as well as to Vietnam for a couple of months during the Vietnam War. I retired in 1989.

What are your interests and hobbies?

Oil painting – I photograph a scene and then paint it. I’ve given away a few as wedding presents. Tramping – I’ve been in tramping

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clubs and used to tramp in the Tararuas every week, also walked the Heaphy Track, etc. I was a member of the Tawa Fitness Centre until just over a year ago.

Favourite sports team and/or sports person?

The only sport I really like is the America's Cup [yachting] and those two guys, [Blair] Tuke and [Peter] Burling. I like following them.

What is your favourite holiday destination in New Zealand?

I like touring the South Island. A lot of places there, too many to name!

What accomplishments/achievements in your life give you the most satisfaction/pride?

Mostly my painting. I am self taught.

What are one or two things you would like to do before you die?

Another tour of the South Island, also to go up Coromandel way. And to stay healthy so I can do that!

(Compiled February 2020)



Derek Thresh's painting of "The Stables" on Zandes Farm, the site of today's Bucket Tree Motel.