



Celebrations

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

New Zealanders sure know how to celebrate, whether that's with barbecues and beach cricket at Christmas, with paper lanterns and lion dances at Chinese New Year, or with kapa haka and kite flying at the Māori New Year celebration Matariki. These get-togethers are a chance to take a break from everyday life, enjoy the company of friends and family, honour cultural traditions, remember the past and welcome the year to come.

In the following pages, a writer wonders whether she'd really trade the Kiwi Christmas of pōhutukawa and picnics for a white Christmas, and a Chinese New Zealander reveals the trials and tribulations of shaping a life and identity here. We also discover more about Matariki's origins, mythology and meaning to Māori. Meanwhile, as *Hobbit* mania continues, the capital's Mayor Celia Wade-Brown remembers the day of the first film's world premiere, when the red carpet unrolled, crowds cheered and the world watched Wellington.



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Aotearoa

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When you think of New Zealand heroes, you probably don't think of the humble honey bee. But this superstar insect is responsible not only for a favourite breakfast spread but for the pollination pivotal to food production; if we want to stop numbers declining, the time to act is now. We also zoom in on native ferns, a symbol of new life for early Māori and now a symbol of national identity that's emblazoned on the jerseys of our sports teams.

We all know New Zealanders are Rugby World Cup champions, but who knew we're also world-beaters when it comes to pet ownership (two in three Kiwis have one) or that pets aid in children's psychosocial development? Another friend to children was literary icon Dame Margaret Mahy. Author Tessa Duder's tribute to her late, great friend gives us a glimpse of not just the public figure but the woman loved by so many.



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History

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

The settlement of New Zealand began with those who braved our rugged, risky coastlines: the Polynesians in canoes, the Europeans in ships, and all those who used the sea as New Zealand's state highway. We can thank Maritime New Zealand and its predecessors for quietly working away to keep our seas safe. Those picturesque coastlines have also helped to lure countless tourists to this far-flung country for more than a century. Check out some classic travel posters advertising our 'sportsman's paradise' of skiing, fishing and horse-riding.

Plenty has been written about the Kiwi soldiers who fought in wars, but much less about those who have been part of the New Zealand Defence Force's 60 peace-support operations internationally in the past 60 years. And 60 years after her Coronation, how has the effigy of the Queen on our coins been updated as she aged? As diplomatically as possible, with just a few wrinkles.



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Some stamps are simply passports that **TAKE** our mail around the country and the world. But stamps that depict quintessentially Kiwi images like Christmas dinner under the pōhutukawa, the East Cape lighthouse or a Māori pātaka (storehouse) deserve more than a quick glance.

That's why, every year for almost three decades, New Zealand Post has published a volume showcasing the stamps issued during the calendar year. You're holding the 2013 hardback in your hands. But this time-honoured tradition isn't just about iconic images – it's also about the stories behind them. Because when you hold up **A** microscope to this country of ours, unexpected stories and surprising details swirl like smoke around a campfire.

Exploring Aotearoa today, its history, and the celebrations that bring us **CLOSER**, New Zealand Stories in Stamps – 2013 reveals little-known details about well-known icons, from Dame Margaret Mahy and The *Hobbit* films to the New Zealand Defence Force and The Queen. It also sings the praises of largely unsung heroes like the pets adored by children, the honey bees who pollinate much of the country's food, and the organisations that look after and look out for us.

So much goes on quietly behind the scenes in Aotearoa – things that, like these stamps, deserve another **LOOK** 