

Occidental poet comes from the east

The long lazy days of the summer break enabled Angela Kemp to discover a new writing talent based out of Port Waikato. Louise Hayward's book 'As It Was' is her first collection of poetry and perfect for holiday reading.

Most weekends and holidays you'll find Louise Hayward in her happy place – a house in Port Waikato she has owned for 13 years and which will one day be her permanent home. For now, with a mortgage to pay, she spends the week in an apartment in Takapuna where she works as a PA.

At the end of last year she published her first book containing her thoughts and journeys from days gone by to provide inspiration, but mostly hope, for the future. It's a beautifully presented book, charmingly illustrated and printed on faux watercolour paper: the antithesis to Kindle.

Louise has compiled near 90 pages of verse compartmentalised into five sections – love, water, earth and a new life. With a nod to her favourite poet Keats, Louise says it's written in 'old speak' but relevant to today and the future.

She began writing four years ago and says the Port has played a major part in the creative process. She describes her home there as her retreat and her sanctuary. "The Port has everything, the river, the ocean, the long walks, the hills, the caves. I can do what I want here, I feel free.

"The writing that I get from Port Waikato is the best, the purest, and it gives me the most descriptive phrases.

Louise's first visit to Port Waikato was when she was invited to spend Christmas with a friend who had a bach there. "I could smell summer, the pine needles ... it was just magical and I thought, this is the place. Then we walked to the beach and on the way I saw my house and it was for sale and I thought I had to have it."

"The house had been on the market for 10 years and it was if it had been waiting for me. The Port Waikato community is beautiful, they really rally together. My neighbours are wonderful and they are always happy to lend a helping hand."

In a way, her life has come full circle. After school Louise wanted to go to university and study journalism but her mum encouraged her to go straight into a job in a bank. She worked her way up to becoming the international banking manager before moving to London to take up a position with Merrill Lynch.

On her return to NZ Louise decided she needed a new direction and completed a course in music, events and artists' management. "I felt like I was home having been involved in the corporate world for so long."

Louise was thrilled to become Kiwi country music legend Gray Bartlett's PA and publicist. "I was helping to bring in people like The Hollies, Hank Marvin, Tommy Emmanuel – legendary guitarists of the time. It was very exciting getting to meet these famous entertainers and this is when I started writing.

“It was like something was woken in me and I wrote some stories – they were terrible! Then one day I was thinking what I could write about when I began to write verses. It didn’t start straight away that they were good enough to go into a book but it was a start.

“I had to be disciplined about writing and would usually start after work and after dinner. I have written the poems in the book over the last two years. I really want to give people hope because sometimes life can be very difficult.”

Louise has two more books she plans to publish in the next couple of years, a children’s book of poetry and one on nature.

“It’s good to introduce children to poetry because these days everyone is in such a rush or on the internet even I haven’t read a novel for a long time. Poetry is perfect for dipping into, you can read one poem then put it down again.”

If you would like to purchase a copy of ‘As It Was’ visit her website at www.louisehaywardbooks.com.