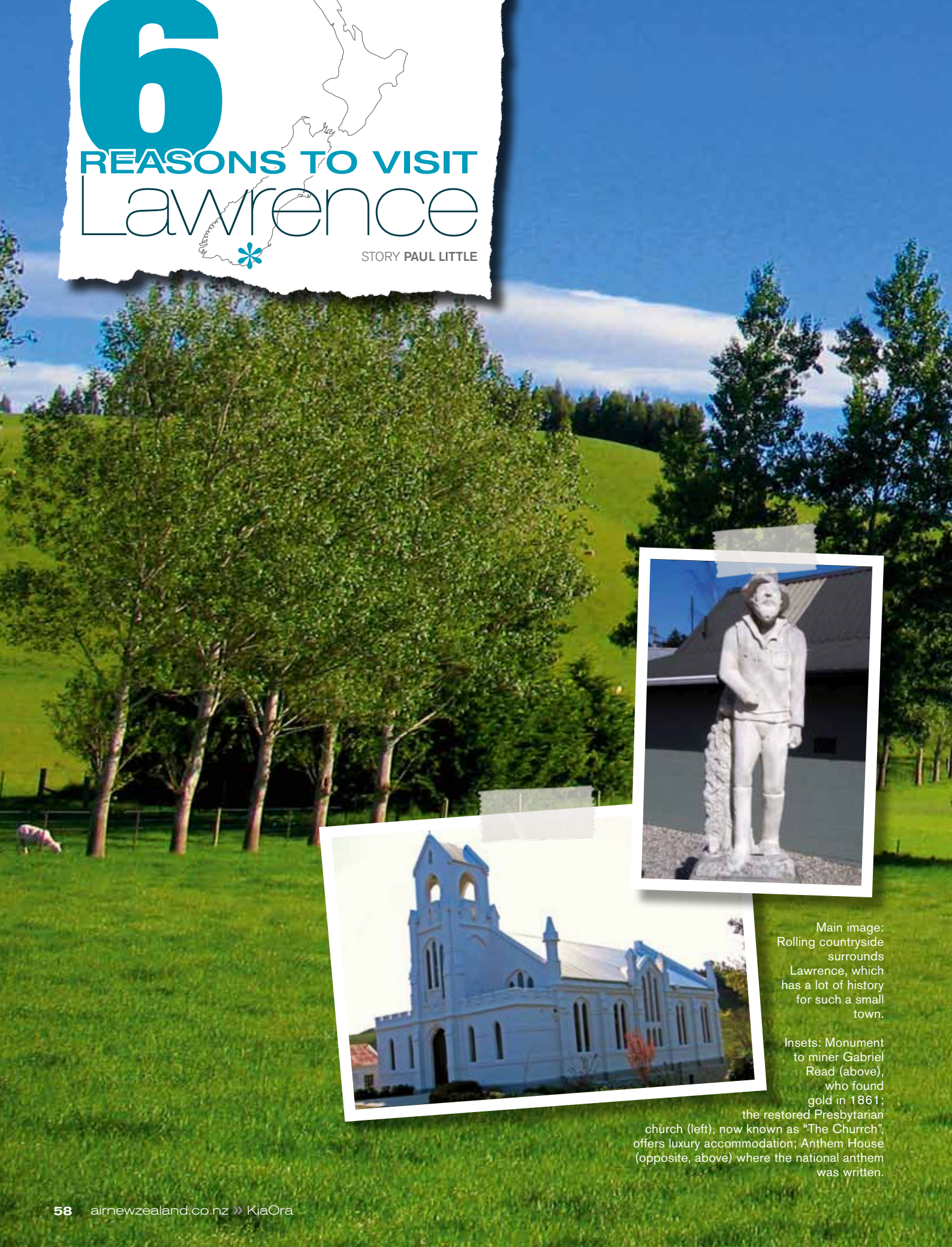


6

REASONS TO VISIT Lawrence

STORY PAUL LITTLE



Main image:
Rolling countryside
surrounds
Lawrence, which
has a lot of history
for such a small
town.

Insets: Monument
to miner Gabriel
Read (above),
who found
gold in 1861;
the restored Presbyterian
church (left), now known as "The Churrch",
offers luxury accommodation; Anthem House
(opposite, above) where the national anthem
was written.

In 1862 miners working the rich Gabriel's Gully goldfield established Lawrence – inside a year, its population grew to more than 14,000, more than twice that of Dunedin. When the gold ran out, Lawrence shrank, leaving a charming town, full of history.



1 ANTHEM HOUSE We begin – as we should begin all important activities – with the national anthem, its tune composed herein. You can't miss the house, on the corner of Lancaster and Lismore streets: it affords that rarest of New Zealand sights – the national flag fluttering aloft a domestic dwelling. Here, teacher John Joseph Woods won the competition to set Thomas Bracken's words to music, with a composition written in a single sitting in 1876. The dwelling is solid, functional, no-nonsense – not unlike the tune itself.

2 GABRIEL'S GULLY Gabriel Read found gold in May 1861 and by September there were 6000 miners here. The gully is reached across a narrow bridge in the centre of town, reflecting how closely the development of Lawrence was connected to the gold rush. Do the hour-and-a-half walk to see what remains of this once frenetic site, covered in men filled with greed for gold – a greed that was sated for many thanks to the richness of the deposits here. The Department of Conservation has done its usual visitor-friendly job of providing clear, informative signs and well-marked paths. What you are walking on is the miners' rubbish tip – as they extracted gold they piled up waste behind them, forming the terrain of today.




3 THE ARK The labour of love of one Frieda Betman, who has developed this garden and bed and breakfast over 20 years since she brought the property, "and all with a hand spade". In winter it is as bare and grey as a polar landscape but you can sense the brightly coloured new blooms waiting to break through. Frieda loves to welcome visitors to the garden she originally attempted to arrange by colours, but now lets nature organise.

4 LAWRENCE INFORMATION CENTRE AND MUSEUM This is a dusty and delightful collection of mainly mining memorabilia from gold rush days. One room is devoted to relics left by the many

Chinese miners, including fragments of pottery. There's background information to make your eyes water, such as that miners made \$18 to \$180 a week when the wage for a shepherd was \$90 to \$100 a year. There are also farming items, including a complete dairy set: butter churn, cheese press and cream separator. Yoghurt apparently came late to Lawrence. The staff here are particularly friendly, well informed and helpful.

5 Lawrence has pulled a fast one on just about everywhere else in the country by providing **FREE WIRELESS INTERNET** around town – and if you're without laptop, all of Lawrence's bars and cafes have computers you can use for free. There is no shortage of watering holes and the cafes would be top-notch even sans internet capacity. The Speight's hot pot with mash and garlic bread (\$16.90 – beef or chicken) at the Coffee Mine Bar and Cafe can confidently be recommended but you would be equally well served at the Lemon Tree, the Coach and Horses or other watering holes around Ross Place.

6 HERITAGE TRAIL Colonsay Street includes an excellent cluster of heritage buildings – churches, courthouse, post office, school and hall. The relevant signs are adequate, but one of the best guides is available at the Information Office, called *The Rich History of Lawrence* and created by Room 3, Lawrence Area School. The students' effort puts many more senior versions to shame, with an eye for trivia and the sort of yarn that makes all the difference between visiting a place and enjoying a visit.

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