



West Auckland Men's Rebus Club

Affiliated to Rebus New Zealand Incorporated

Newsletter

MARCH 2020

***Meeting starts at 9:45 am Friday 6 March 2020, in the Kelston Community Centre
There will also be a second meeting this month, starting at 9:45 am Friday 13 March 2020, in our new meeting place,
the New Lynn Friendship Hall***

COMMITTEE

The incoming Committee for 2020 is:

President	Bill Mutch
Vice President	?
Immediate Past President	Bill Fairs
Secretary	Vince Middeldorp
Treasurer	Justin Griffith
Almoner	Trayton Wickens & Barry O'Rourke
Outings	Ian Smith
Speakers	Noel Rose
Newsletter	John Mihaljevic
Hospitality	Trevor Pollard & Alan Babich
Membership	Laurie Vincent
Attendance	Eric Strickett
Rebus Federation Liaison	Bill Fairs
Mid-Winter & Christmas	Laurie Vincent
Sound System	Vince Middeldorp
Projector & Screen	Noel Rose

This is subject to confirmation by the AGM and might be amended by it.

It was felt that there should be two Almoners, at least for now, because Barry and Trayton each knows his own people.
We could consider having **two** people for each position, the second to take over if the first is unavailable, either temporarily or permanently.

March will be a full and interesting month, with **two** meetings. The Rebus AGM will be held at the old Rebus venue (Kelston Community Centre) on the old Rebus date (first Friday of the month (6 March)). The first Rebus meeting at the new Rebus venue (New Lynn Friendship Hall) on the new date (second Friday of the month) will be on 13 March: these will be the venue and dates for future meetings; though note that, because of Good Friday, the **April** meeting will be on Friday **24** April, not the 10th. There will be a Club Speaker (Neil Castle, on *Westmere and Meola Reef*) before the AGM on 6 March. James Duncan will return with Part 2 of *Trams of Auckland* on 13 March. Coffee Mornings will continue to be on the third Friday of the month, at venues to be announced.

Bill Fairs will finally be able to stand down as President and Speaker Organiser and thus achieve his long-held ambition of being able to sit in the Front Row rather than at the High Table. I am sure that we all appreciate the years of sterling service in both roles that he has given. He will no doubt continue to serve the Club as Immediate Past President. He has agreed to continue as Rebus Federation Liaison. He will certainly be a hard act to follow, but we can rest assured that Bill Mutch and Noel Rose will be worthy successors. Thank you, Bill.

I am also sure that we all appreciate the sterling service that outgoing Secretary Jack Morley has given the Club over the years; not only as Secretary, but also as Newsletter Editor before me. Thank you, Jack.

Jack's need to stand down as Secretary, because of ill health (his own and his wife's), underscores a sad fact of clubs such as ours: that we are all old enough that health, our own or our loved ones', is liable to be problematic. Much as we would like to continue as active members of the Club, we are not always able to do so. This is one of the reasons why I try to make the Newsletter as comprehensive as possible. I want it to be the medium by which members no longer able to actively participate in the Club's activities can still be part of our Club Community. I welcome contributions to the Newsletter from members. All members. Not just those who are still able to physically attend its activities, but also those who no longer can. Your continued membership of and involvement with the Club is welcome. Do not feel that, just because you can no longer take an active physical part in the Club's activities, that you have to resign from it. Quite the contrary. You are still an important and welcome part of our Club Community.

This also applies to the widows of members. They were also part of our Club Community while their husbands were alive. There is no need for them to break that link just because their husbands are no longer with us. Widows are also get the Newsletter, and are also welcome to our monthly Coffee Mornings.

I would also like to extend a hearty welcome to all those members of New Lynn Mens Probus who have chosen to join us at West Auckland Mens Rebus. I am sure that we all hope and expect this development to be of benefit to us all.

FEBRUARY MEETING

President Bill Fairs opened the meeting by wishing all a Happy New Year: it does promise to be an interesting and exciting year for our Club (of which more below).

Bill noted the passing of one of our long-standing members: Arild Hansen (1995, President 2002). He did comment on the low turnout of members at Arild's funeral, which was conducted by our own Almoner, Trayton Wickens. We stood for a minute's silence in honour of Arild.

Trayton was 90 on the day before the February meeting, and Bill had been looking forward to congratulating him in person. Unfortunately, the celebrations on the day had proved too much for the birthday boy, and he was incapacitated with a sore shoulder. We all wish him well, and look forward to his next 90 years!

Apologies were received from Bob Lee, Roger Laloli, Jack Morley, Trayton Wickens and Ken Slocum. Jack is 'not too good': his Parkinsons has progressed to the point where he has difficulty typing on his laptop. As will be noted below, we will soon be able to relieve him of his secretarial responsibilities, from which he can, after many years of devoted service, take a well-earned retirement. Trayton's shoulder has already been noted. Ken's dementia seems to have developed to the point that he will no longer be able to take an active part in the Club.

These things highlight the great disadvantage of a club such as ours: in order to qualify for membership, you have to be old enough that health is likely to be an issue. But let us take full advantage of life in general and of the Club in particular while we can.

There were 18 members in attendance, and two guests, both from New Lynn Mens Probus: Bob Lee and Peter Cox.

Bill had prepared the minutes of the previous meeting, but had forgotten to bring them. I am sure we can take his word for it.

The only Correspondence was the normal stuff from Rebus Federation and, in his absence, no Almoner's Report from Trayton.

Treasurer Justin Griffith was present, and reported that we are still solvent, with about \$1700 in cash and in the bank. He will have a full report for us at the AGM. The Annual Subscription (still \$40) is now due. Justin received a round of applause.

Outings Organiser Ian Smith noted that the Coffee Mornings are going well. He reminded us that we have two this month: lunch at Denny's (New Lynn) on the usual day (Friday 21 February), to fit with New Lynn Mens Probus' AGM, which some of us attended as members; and a train and ferry trip to Pepperjacks at Pine Harbour (Wednesday 26 February). Both events are reported below. The March (20th) Coffee Morning will be at the Cafe at Corban Estate (see below).

Ian also took the opportunity to tell us of the Dance Classes available at the Corban Estate. He recommends them as good exercise. See below for details.

In light of the new Corona Virus, Ian pointed out the need to bolster our immune systems. He recommended Vitamin D for this purpose. It is available free via sunlight, or, failing that, by tablet. Vince referred to a study of the effectiveness (or not) of alternate medicines, which found that Vitamin D was the best.

Bill noted that it was the 75th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, which reminded him of his (late) friend Willie Schneider: a survivor of that institution, who was one of our Guest Speakers.

Bill also noted an item from the Herald's Sideswipe column, on nicknames given to bosses. He was particularly taken by Brian, who, having lost an eye, became known as Bran. As well he might: bran is a highly-recommended food (see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bran>). Bran was also a Celtic god, of Health and Regeneration (see <http://www.angelfire.com/wizard/celticdeities/>).

Bill then chaired a discussion on the future of our club, especially with respect to our relationship with New Lynn Mens Probus. But first, he gave us more of his Words of Wisdom: *Happiness in life is not measured by the things that we achieve, the places we go or the route that we take to get there. Happiness in life is measured by the people that we share all our experiences with.* Sounds like a Mission Statement for Rebus.

DISCUSSION

When I first joined this Club, when it was still Probus, almost five years ago, a major concern even then was its future, in particular, how it might survive in the face of falling membership. In particular, there was talk even then of our relationship with New Lynn Mens Probus and how the two clubs might work together, even amalgamate, to mutual benefit.

This concern continues, driven by falling membership, which puts the survival of the Club in question. As it is, it already limits our activities, especially outings, and makes it difficult to find Club Officers. New Lynn Mens Probus is in the same situation.

Several of us are members of both clubs. Some of us (myself, Bill, Vince and Trevor) have put forward suggestions. Bill has used our Coffee Mornings to discuss the matter with Probus Committee members, who have attended them.

Probus is probably in even worse condition than we are. As noted in the February Newsletter, they seem unable to find a president or vice president, so that it is likely to fold. Matters will come to a head at their AGM, on 21 February, which may well decide to dissolve New Lynn Mens Probus. Bill 'would really like' that to happen'. It would allow the (former) members of New Lynn Mens Probus to join West Auckland Mens Rebus, which would give us a total membership of about 50 to 60, which would solve all our problems.

The current (outgoing) President of Probus, Bill Mutch, is in favour. He would like to stand as President of the new, combined club, which would allow Bill Fairs to (finally) step down. Similarly, Vince Middeldorp, who was to become Secretary of Probus, would then be able to become Secretary of Rebus, which would relieve Jack Morley. Justin is willing to remain as Treasurer, or Deputy Treasurer. Trevor Pollard, the Probus Catering Manager, would work with our own Alan Babich. Bill Fairs will continue as Speaker Organiser and also continue to liaise with Graeme Macintosh of the Rebus Federation. You will probably have to continue to put up with me on the Newsletter.

In fact, we could combine the two sets of committee members by giving each Officer an assistant (or understudy), who can help or cover for the primary officer. In effect, apply the President-Vice President principle to every position on committee. The bank account details would remain the same.

A possible (likely?) major change would be to move our monthly meetings from the Kelston Community Centre to the New Lynn Friendship Hall (Probus's venue). Although it would involve a longer journey for some, it is a much nicer venue, and apparently cheaper. Given that Kelston is supposed to be closed for a while at some stage for major renovation, we would have to relocate, at least temporarily, anyway, so we might as well make a virtue of it. It may, however, require a change of date, from the first to the second Friday of the month.

The Friendship Hall is conveniently located, in the centre of New Lynn. There is plenty of parking and it is only about 5 minutes walk from the New Lynn Transport Hub. Information on how to find it are given below.

Bill noted that the Rebus Federation has a much lighter touch than the Probus equivalent. It is available to help when required, otherwise it keeps out of the way. Vince noted that Probus limited membership to retired or semiretired business or professional people or worthy occupation, whereas Rebus was a more general retired or semiretired people of good standing. So Bernie Madoff would be acceptable to Probus, but not Rebus (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madoff_investment_scandal)!

Vince noted that if (when?) New Lynn Mens Probus folded, its assets(funds) would go to charity. Although not registered as such, West Auckland Mens Rebus does qualify as charity, so could receive those funds. Probus South Pacific would not have any claim on them.

Ken Watson asked if Probus was a mens club – it is. If fact, there was a marked disinclination to go combined. Members had no problem with having the ladies attend specific occasions, but anyone who wanted a combined club was free to go elsewhere.

Bill asked for a show of hands on these proposals. Everyone at the meeting was in favour.

After reiterating that we would be better off under these proposals, Bill undertook to keep us informed of developments.

Please note that the above was written **before** the Probus AGM. What follows is an account of what transpired at that AGM and at the subsequent lunch at Denny's, to which Probus members were invited.

The 2020 AGM of New Lynn Mens Probus was held on Friday 21 2020, in the New Lynn Friendship Hall. The main item of business was their future, specifically their relationship with West Auckland Mens Rebus. Their, and now also our, new Secretary, Vince Middeldorp, gave a presentation on the situation:

In 2013, there were 453 Probus clubs in New Zealand and 272 Probus clubs changed their affiliation from Australian company Probus South Pacific Ltd, to Probus New Zealand Incorporated. As the result of a High Court case, Probus New Zealand Incorporated changed its name to Friendship New Zealand Incorporated.

Rebus NZ Incorporated was registered around this time and following dissatisfaction with Friendship New Zealand Incorporated, offered New Zealand clubs an alternative affiliation option. There are now 53 Rebus Clubs in New Zealand.

In November 2019, Probus South Pacific advised that capitation fees for New Zealand would rise to \$7.95 and described all the benefits committees and members received from Probus South Pacific Ltd. The problem is that the monthly meetings and outings were entirely the result of members' efforts and no members used any Probus services.

Murray Young, the secretary of New Lynn Men's Probus Club, has repeatedly sent out emails warning the club might have to close because no one was interested in standing for office. The most recent of these emails was sent in January 2020 and suggested the club could be dissolved at the AGM in February 2020.

Also in January 2020, in the Rebus Chronicles, Rebus NZ Incorporated advised it was inviting Probus clubs to consider Rebus as an affiliation option and that its capitation fee for 2020 would be \$2.75.

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	Notes	2019 \$	2018 \$
Revenue and other income			
Travel insurance income		2,498,813	2,338,604
Capitation fees (incl. administration & insurance)		1,507,395	1,446,472
Advertising revenue		553,474	558,367
Sale of Australian National Publication		378,524	387,700
Subsidies and sponsorships		26,250	15,750
Royalties and gratuities		24,874	22,533
Interest received		7,961	8,476
Foreign currency translation gains	2(i)	2,127	59
Revenue and other income	2(j)	4,999,418	4,777,961
Expenditure			
Insurance premiums	2(k)(i)	2,284,502	2,179,891
Employee benefits expense	2(e), 13	930,439	830,760
Cost of goods sold –Australian National Publication	2(k)(ii)	510,958	532,049
Membership growth, marketing and promotion	2(k)(iv)	339,731	227,296
Postage, printing and stationery		322,764	283,142
Management and administration	2(k)(iii)	142,309	141,916
Depreciation and amortisation expense	2(d), 2(l)	89,337	83,498
Legal and company secretarial services	2(k)(v)	72,314	96,092
Computer services and support expenses		69,723	70,452
Office suite maintenance		56,967	59,150

Probus South Pacific Ltd annual reports provide information on this company. There are ten directors, capitation fee income in 2019 was \$1.5 million, and directors expenses (the line entry Management and administration) appear to be \$142,309.

Probus club constitutions and the Rebus club constitutions are for the most part word for word identical. Where there are differences, it is because improvements have been made in the Rebus constitution. For example, Probus requires a new member to have retired from some worthy occupation, and Rebus requires a new member to be of good character.

Another difference is that the Probus constitution requires certain roles to be filled e.g. Vice-President and the Rebus constitution allows those roles to remain unfilled provided members agree. Vacancies therefore do not result in a failure to comply with the constitution and closure of the club.



For some months now West Auckland Men's Rebus and New Lynn Men's Probus have been inviting members from the other club to coffee mornings and gold card trips. The result has been more fun, friendship and fellowship for everyone who has known about and taken advantage of this change.

Philip Booth the Probus South Pacific Ltd Treasurer for 2019 labelled the situation in New Lynn Men's Probus and West Auckland Men's Rebus as resulting from a regrettable pattern that is repeated again and again. This pattern ends up with insufficient members willing and able to take up leadership roles leading to a club closure.

Between 2012 and 2018, Probus club membership in Australia and New Zealand fell from 174,970 to 128,651. That means the number of members fell by 46,319 and suggests thousands of clubs closed.

Graeme McIntosh from Rebus asks, "why send money off-shore when there is a fully functioning entity that now has a proven track record of 24/7 service to its affiliates?" He also says two clubs in Queensland have contacted Rebus to explore how they can become Rebus affiliates because of ongoing dissatisfaction with Probus South Pacific Ltd and ever increasing affiliation fees.

Both New Lynn Men's Probus and West Auckland Men's Rebus are going to have unfilled positions in 2020 if they continue to operate independently. If they combine their committees, all positions can be filled.

The suggested way forward for 2020 is for members of New Lynn Men's Probus to become members of West Auckland Men's Rebus and for the monthly meeting to be held at the Friendship Hall in New Lynn.

Following this presentation and the ensuing discussion, the meeting passed, with only two dissenters, the following resolution:

That New Lynn Men's Probus goes into recess for 2020 and the membership transfers to West Auckland Men's Rebus for 2020. The relationship between the two clubs to be reviewed at SGM meetings called by both clubs in February 2021.

President Bill says the following on the subject:

At the AGM of the New Lynn Mens Probus Club it was voted to put the Club in recess, after a very successful Powerpoint presentation from Vince Middledorp, in which he explained all the benefits of a change to Rebus. I could not have asked for a better end to what has been a trying year to what we all believe is the saviour for both clubs.

We now have a combine membership of about 57. The financial benefits will be greatly felt, and a far nicer hall will be an asset.

I believe we have a far better chance of new membership based in New Lynn and that will be our main goal for the coming year.

With a good mixture of officers from both clubs we look forward to being well served.

I will have more to say before our AGM, at which time I will thank our outgoing secretary Jack Morley for his solid service over the years.

Your smiling President Bill Fairs.

As a result, for at least this year, New Lynn Mens Probus has effectively merged – someone described it as a 'marriage' - with West Auckland Mens Probus. This will effectively double our membership (50-60 instead of 25-30), which will solve a lot of problems. Rebus will assume the hire of the Friendship Hall, so that, from March, our monthly meetings will be held in the **New Lynn Friendship Hall**, on the **second** Friday of the month. Hopefully, this will be convenient for everyone.

Coffee Mornings and other outings will continue as before.

The subsequent lunch at Dennys is covered below, under Outings.

SPEAKER

February's Club Speaker was to have been Neil Castle, on one of his many interests, but he deferred to allow time for the discussion above. He will now speak, on *Meola Reef and Westmere* (where he grew up), at the (first) March meeting.

We did have a Guest Speaker: **James Duncan**, Tramways Projects Coordinator at MOTAT. James was introduced by his close friend and MOTAT colleague, Justin Griffith.



James looked quite resplendent in his motorman's uniform:



– but he soon had to accommodate the weather!

Note also the title of his presentation. This is Part 1 of 3, covering the glory days of the Auckland electric tram system (1902 to 1956). He will cover Parts 2 (Decline) and 3 (Trash to Treasure) in March. Part 1 shows what was, and what might still be, if Auckland had not become besotted with the car.

James grew up in Auckland in the 1960s and 1970s, during the heyday of Auckland's large and extensive trolley bus system. Also powered via overhead wires, trolley buses were essentially trams on rubber wheels and no rails. An early interest in trolley buses became an interest in electric trams. At the age of 15 he joined MOTAT's tramways section as a volunteer, and has now been with them for 44 years. He has mostly filled various administrative roles, but is now MOTAT's Motorman Examiner, responsible for ensuring that those volunteers who drive MOTAT's trams are fully competent and confident to do so. This is a very responsible job – the importance of having tram drivers – motormen – who know what they are doing was illustrated by an incident he described (see below) where this not being the case led to tragedy. Being in charge of an 18 tonne vehicle carrying 50 or more people is a serious matter, and James is responsible for ensuring that it is always so.

Most of his working life was in retail, mostly George Courts and Smith and Caughey. In 2011 he was offered his 'dream job': Operations Manager of the then-new Wynyard Quarter Tramway. In 2014 Auckland Council's development agency, Punuku, took it over. It is into property development, not trams, Therefore, the Wynyard Quarter Tramway no longer operates, though a revival is possible. James left there in 2019, to go to MOTAT, where he is, in his own words, a 'pig sitting in mud': paid to do what he loves from Monday to Friday, then volunteering on weekends.



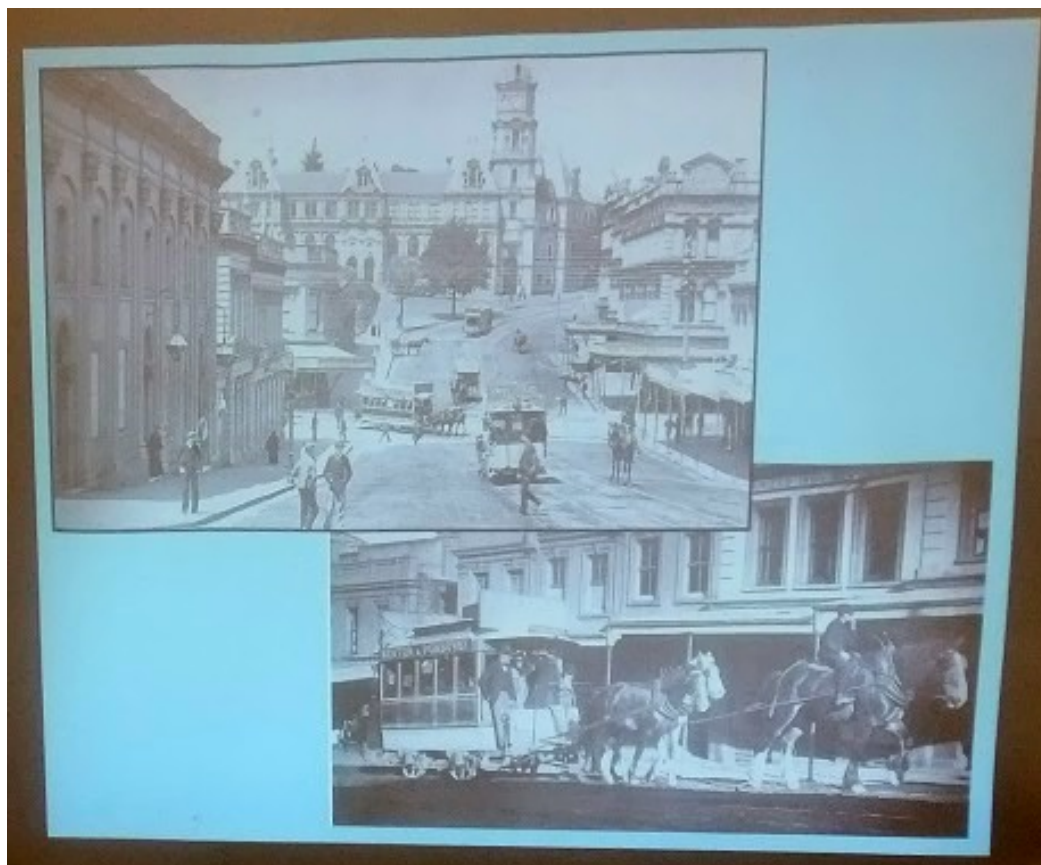
In his element

James gathers his information from a variety of sources. One is the tram historian Graham Stewart (*When Trams Were Trumps in New Zealand: an illustrated history*), who started tram preservation. As well as the individual memories of those were directly involved with trams, James also uses the collective memories encapsulated in contemporary newspapers, per Papers Past (see <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers>).

James's story begins in 1871. This was not the beginning of trams in Auckland, but it was the beginning of Auckland City in the constitutional sense. (see *Decently and in order: the government of the city of Auckland 1840-1971: the centennial history of the Auckland City Council* by G.W.A. Bush). There was no public transport whatsoever then. Except for the few who could afford a horse to ride on or behind, everyone walked everywhere, every time. And thought nothing of it. Since everywhere had to be within walking distance of everywhere else, Auckland was small and compact. Ponsonby (to the west) and Newmarket (to the south), which are now virtually CBD, were then outlying suburbs: beyond them was the country side, if developed at all, then only as farms. As James went on to describe, the change from as it was then to as it is now was largely due to trams.

From the 1860s, steam rail came to New Zealand. Auckland's first line (Auckland to Onehunga) opened in 1873. The Auckland Station was at the bottom of Queen Street, where it still is, though not continuously.

Public transport came to Auckland's streets in the 1886, in the form of small, horse-drawn trams linking the CBD with the then outlying suburbs of Ponsonby and Newmarket. Both routes began at the railway station (which was also conveniently adjacent to Queens Wharf, a main point of entry to the city), then up Queen Street to Wellesley Street, where they went their different ways. Wellesley Street was (and remains) steep in both directions. To help the tram horses up the slopes, powerful clydesdales, in the care of teenage 'Hill Boys' were literally hooked onto the trams, to add extra traction.



The unpaved roads were especially muddy and difficult in winter. Male passengers often had to get off and push.

Meanwhile, overseas (the Northern Hemisphere) electric trams were coming into use. They had many advantages over horse-drawn trams. They were bigger and more powerful. They were also faster, if only because they did not have to stop often to rest the horses.

Their development was promoted in particular by land developers. Developers bought cheap farmland beyond the built-up area, built a tram line to it and subdivided it. These new suburban housing developments had quick and easy access to the central city (and each other), so were snapped-up by city dwellers eager to escape the confines of the city. Electric trams enabled them to enjoy spacious suburban – almost rural – life while retaining ready access to the economic advantages of the city. As areas close to the central city were developed and populated, the process could be repeated further out. Repeatedly. Urban sprawl courtesy of steel wheels on rails, not rubber tyres on roads.

Electric trams kept getting closer and closer to Auckland; in the 1890s Sydney and Brisbane had them. Auckland had to follow suit. In 1899 the Auckland Electric Tramways Company (see <https://partofpastnzhistory.blogspot.com/2014/04/auckland-electric-tramways-company.html>) began two years of negotiations with the City Council to build and operate an electric tram system, to meet the needs of a growing city. Auckland would lead the way in New

Zealand, to become a leading city availing itself of the latest technology. All at no cost whatsoever to the ratepayers: it would be paid for by the Auckland Electric Tramways Company's London parent, the British Electric Traction Company, whose primary interest was land development.

The Tramways Company had to do it all itself: there was no existing infrastructure that it could just tap into (except the roads, such as they were – their limitations and their impact will be covered later). The Company even had to build its own power station; at the bottom of Hobson Street (below where Farmers parking building used to be). Electricity was then still largely a mysterious novelty. The power station produced a surplus of electricity, which was sold to the Council for street lighting – carbon arc lamps mounted on poles supporting the overhead wires supplying the trams. A distinct improvement on the old gas lamps, though I suspect the arc light was rather hard on the eyes.

Even then the supply chain was global. The power station and the rails came from the US, while the rest (the overhead wires and their support structure, as well as the trams themselves) came from Britain – mostly supplied by subsidiaries of the parent company.

Work progressed rapidly. The first sod was turned in August 1901 and it was all built in a year – entirely by hand! If only they had had the foresight to build the CRL and all the other things currently rattling Mike Hoskings' cage then!

The first lines followed the old horse tram lines: from the railway station at the bottom of Queen Street, up Queen Street to Wellesley Street, then their separate ways to Newmarket, Parnell and Ponsonby. As well as the power station, the tracks and the wiring, the work included a tram depot at Ponsonby and underground feeder cables from the power station to the lines. Very modern.

The corner of Queen and Customs Streets featured a 'Grand Union Junction':



There were only six such structures in the world, two in Auckland - the other being at the corner of Queen and Wellesley Streets.

The first 43 trams came from England in kitset form, in batches of 12 or 13. The trams were built in England, then dismantled and 'flat-packed' - floor, sides, roof – for easier shipping to Auckland.. The first batch arrived in June 1902 and the trams were unpacked and reassembled by local coachbuilders, ready to enter service later that year.

There were 3 classes of tram:



A Class (in the middle) were little 4-wheelers comparable to the old horse trams. They could carry 32 passengers. Because of their tendency to pitch and roll, they were referred to as 'dinghys'.

B Class (on the left) were known as 'combinations', they had a closed central part and open ends. The latter proved to be quite unsuitable for Auckland conditions and were soon also enclosed.

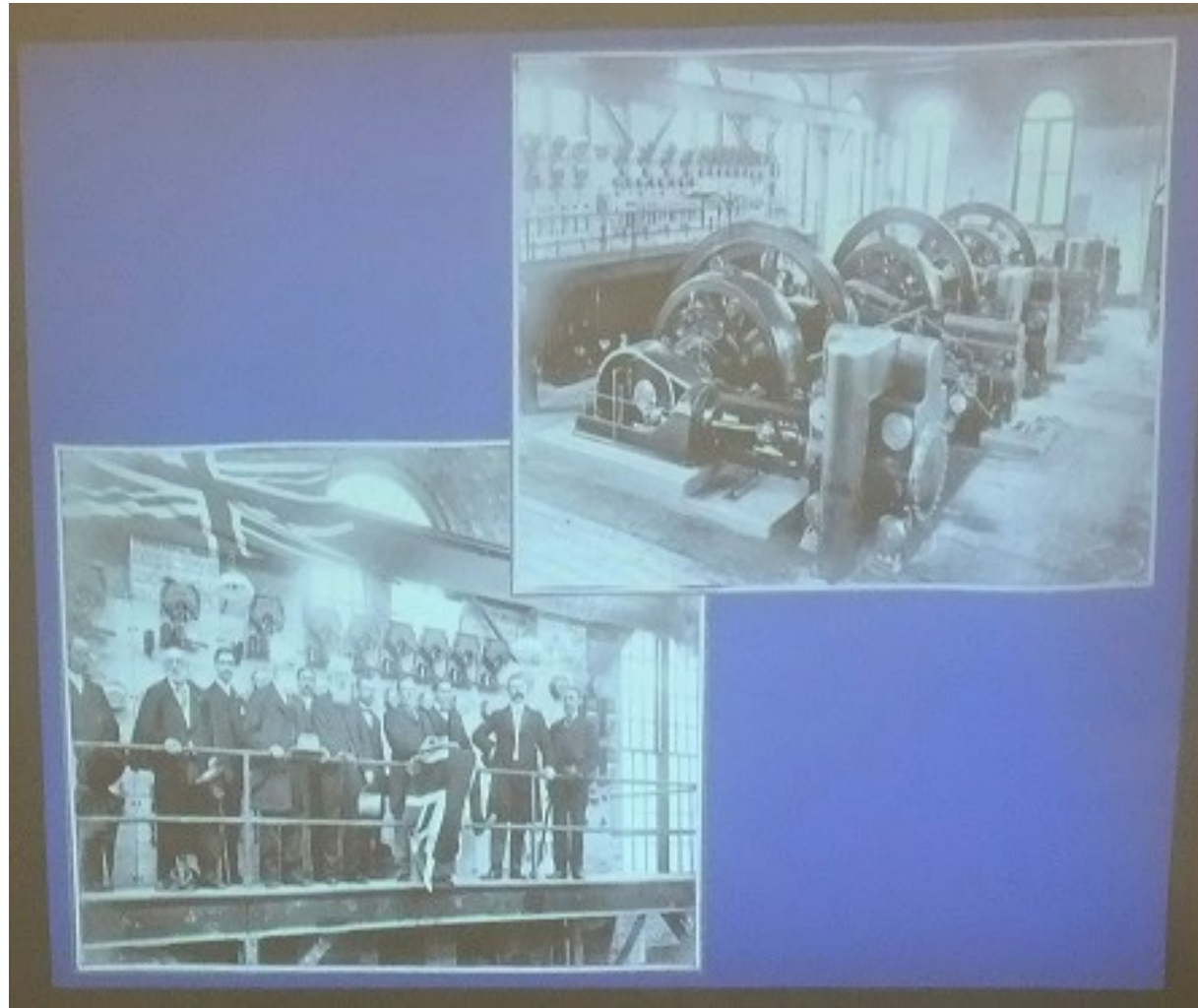
C Class (on the right) were open-topped double deckers. There were 6 of them, used on peak routes and to take crowds to and from major events. One such major venue was Alexandra Park, which, in the days before Eden Park, hosted rugby matches as well as race meetings.

It was intended that the Ponsonby line would be running by November 1902 and Parnell and Newmarket by that Christmas.

As well as the physical plant, staff were needed to operate the trams: Motormen, who drove them, and Conductors, who made it all worth while. It was no problem hiring conductors locally – anyone who could add was suitable. Motormen, by contrast, were highly skilled and none were available locally. The Company therefore advertised for motormen in Sydney. It was able to hire 11, who were to both drive the trams initially and also train locals as motormen.

The 11 motormen and their families travelled to Auckland on the *Elingamite*, which sank on the way and only 8 of the men survived. To allow them to recover from their ordeal, the start of the tram service was postponed a week, until Monday 24 November.

The opening day of the electrics was Monday 17 November. Power was on at 12:30, followed by the opening ceremony for the public around 1:30.

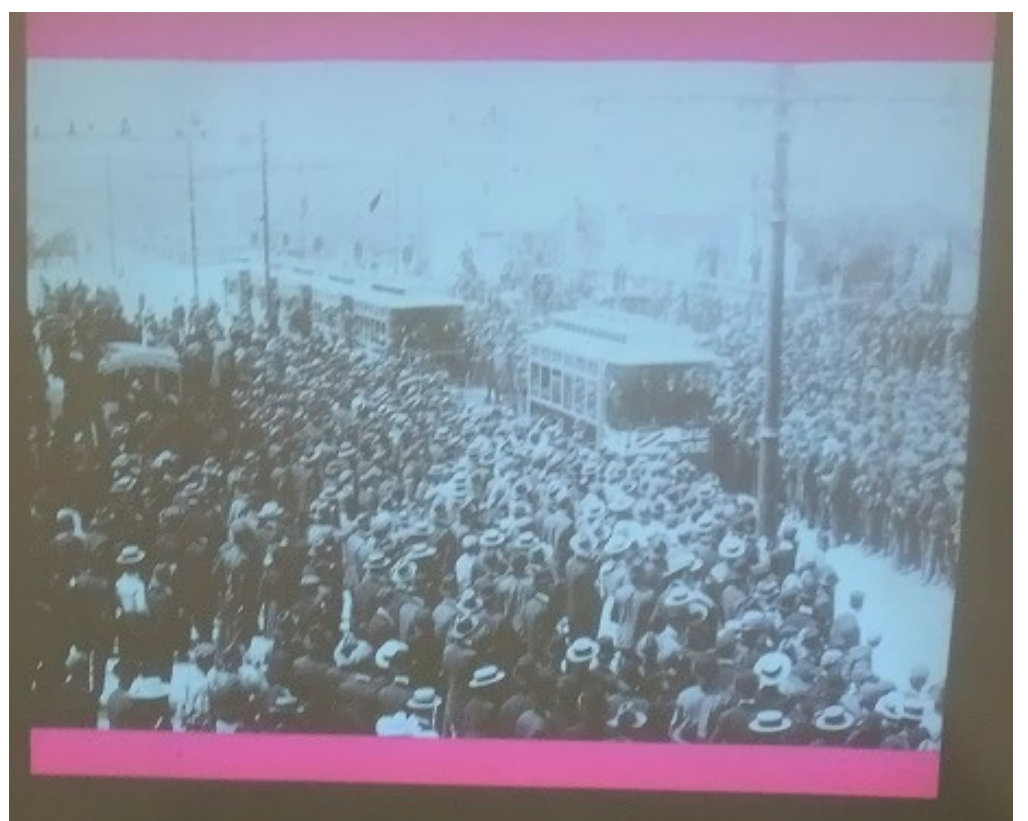


The worthies then adjourned to the bottom of Queen Street, where 6 brand-new trams awaited them to inaugurate the service.

Large crowds were on hand:



Even more lined the route:



The trams with invited guests travelled up Queen Street, Wellesley Street east to Symonds Street, then down Symonds Street to the Choral Hall for a slap-up lunch.

Motormen were revered: they not only controlled these strange new horseless conveyances but they were also masters of the even more mysterious power of electricity. It was therefore only fitting that Sir John Logan Campbell – the Father of Auckland – who had been a staunch advocate of trams throughout should start the first tram – and to be given a motorman's license for the occasion.

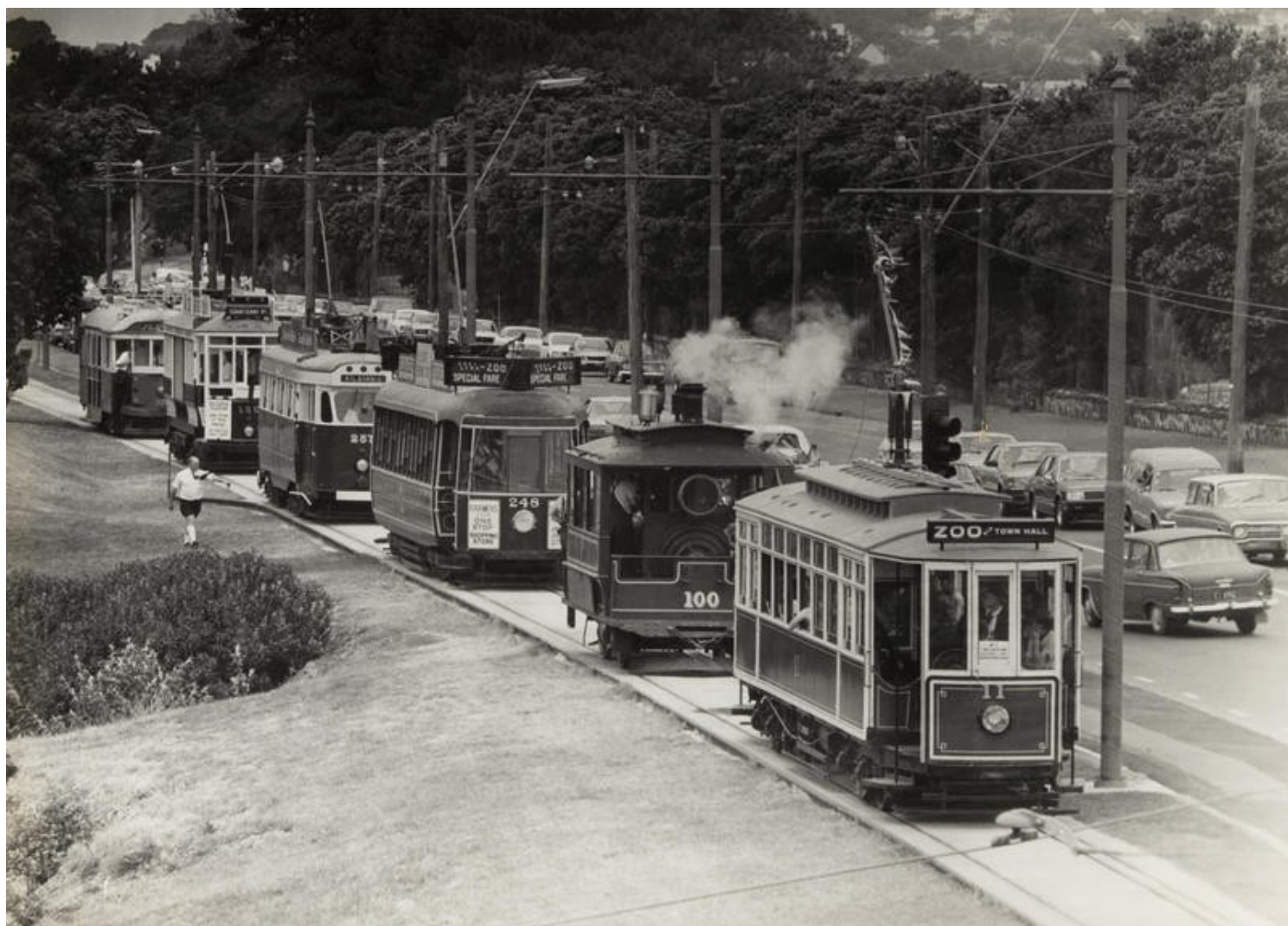
As the first tram crossed Customs Street its pole came off the wire and it lost power and ground to a halt. The pole was soon restored to its proper position and function and the tram continued on its way. The other five trams followed suit – literally. Each lost its pole and power in succession as it turned across Customs Street. Soon corrected and the powers-that-be realised that the alignment would have to be checked and corrected. This was done during the week before the public service to Ponsonby began on Monday 24 November. The tram convey continued on its way to the Choral Hall, where its passengers celebrated the successful inauguration of Auckland's electric tram service in a suitable manner. All-in-all, a very successful opening ceremony.

This was followed by the start of the public service to Ponsonby a week later. There were some teething problems. Passengers had to get used to getting on and off at designated stops. Horses hated the trams. Trams aroused the herding instinct in dogs, who ran after them nipping at their wheels, as they would farm animals. However, Darwinian selection kicked in and the survivors learned to desist.

Services to Parnell and Newmarket were running by Christmas 1902. The ever-parochial Newmarket Borough Council insisted on hiring a special tram to convey its councillors and their wives from Queen Street to Newmarket on the inaugural service. On arrival at Newmarket, the men promptly adjourned to the nearest hostelry, leaving their wives awaiting their belated return, sitting on the hard wooden seats of the tram. Women did not go into pubs in those days. I wonder what effect that had on marital relations, or did they meekly accept it? How times have changed!

Services began to Herne Bay, Arch Hill, Kingsland and Epsom in early 1903.

The very first tram to be assembled, Number 11, had served for 50 years when the Auckland Transport Board decided to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of electric trams in Auckland, in November 1952. Tram Number 11 was revamped and used to give free rides to mark the occasion. It was then decided to preserve Number 11, but no one wanted to pay for it, so it was carted off to the Zoo and dumped in a corner. There it remained until 1974, when it was donated to the then relatively new MOTAT (see <https://www.motat.org.nz/>), where it was restored to its 1912 condition. It is still working at MOTAT, giving rides to visitors and allowing the likes of James and Justin to live out their boyhood fantasies.



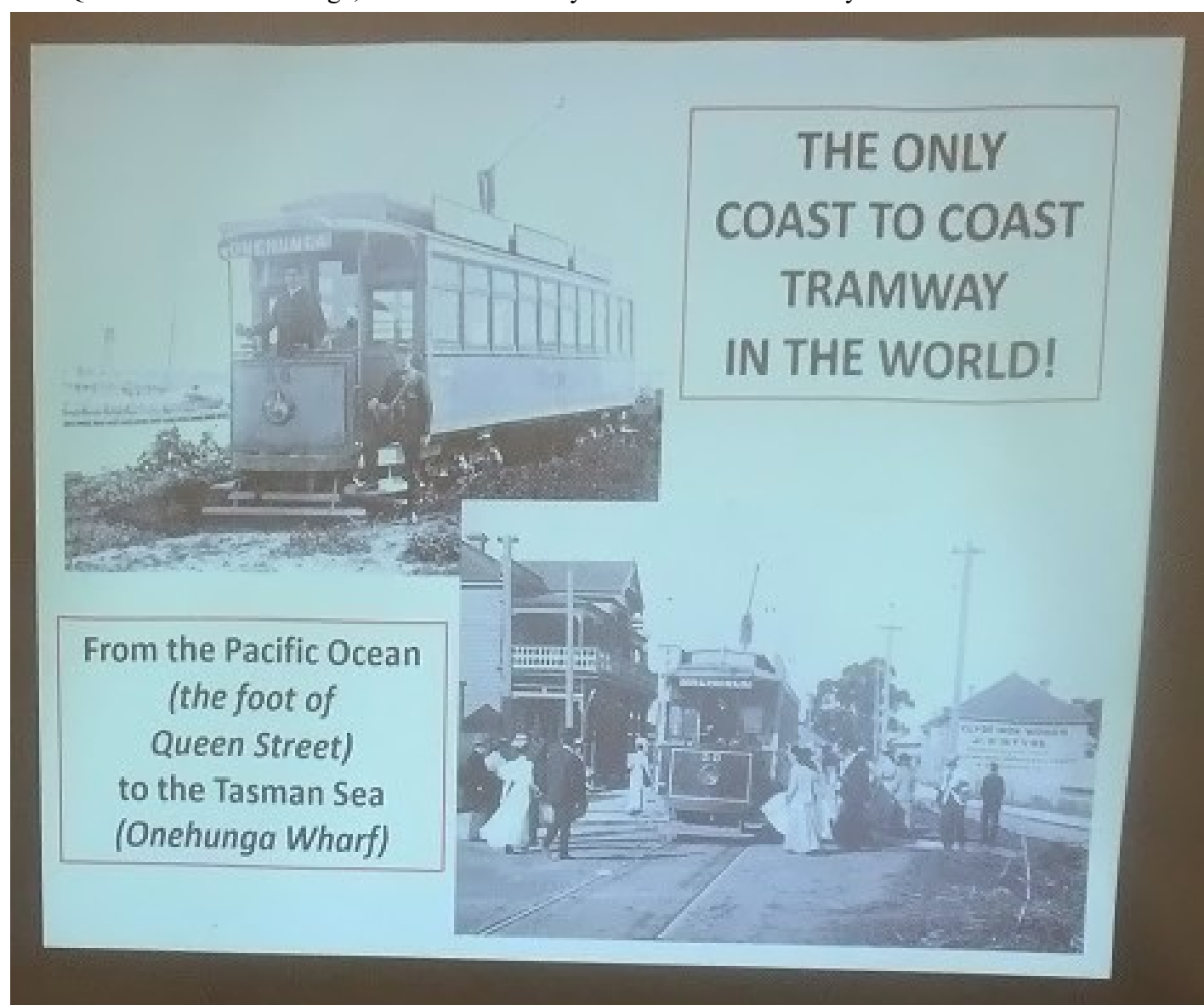
Number 11 leading the procession at MOTAT, 28 November 1982 (see <https://collection.motat.org.nz/objects/103681>). Note that Tram 100 (the second in the line) is a steam tram. Number 11 in full colour:



The Tramways Company raised a perfect storm when, in September 1903, it proposed running trams on Sundays. The controversy split the city, with equally vehement opinion for and against. Even the clergy were split. Some were fiercely opposed to divine services being disrupted by the clanking monsters. Others were equally in favour, since it would give worshippers easy access to church regardless of distance or weather.

The question was put to a referendum in late August. There was a very slender majority (22, reduced to 19 on recount) in favour of Sunday trams. The Company assuaged the anti group by deciding to stop the trams in their tracks – literally – for 2 hours on Sundays (11 am to noon and 7 pm to 8 pm). An interesting sidelight on the pecking order of the Company's employees was that the motormen were paid during these stops, but the conductors were not. James did not mention what the passengers thought of the interruptions to their trips.

The longest route in the system was Queen Street to Onehunga, touted as 'The Only Coast to Coast Tramway in the World!':



This opened in 1903 (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onehunga_Branch). This was before there was a direct rail link between Auckland and Wellington, so that getting from Auckland to Wellington involved train (from the 1870s) or tram (from 1903) from Auckland to Onehunga, steamer from Onehunga to New Plymouth, then train from New Plymouth to Wellington. The tram from Auckland to Onehunga was faster and more comfortable than the train.

For more images of Onehunga trams, see <https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=auckland+trams+to+onehunga&qpv=auckland+trams+to+onehunga&FORM=IGRE>.

The opening of the Onehunga Line inspired the still-popular institution of the ‘Day Trip’. Whole families could now tram from home to Auckland, then to Onehunga, picnic there, then return home by tram. Initially, they would take a packed lunch with them from home, but the Tramways Company soon found a new source of income, by opening the San Souci Tea Kiosk in Onehunga, also in 1903.

The Company also found another profitable market niche: ‘Electric Freight’. It built and ran Tram Number 44 for freight only, on the Auckland-Onehunga line. Even then, mail order shopping was very popular. Much of it was shipped from Auckland via Onehunga to points south. It arrived in Onehunga in much better condition by tram than by train.

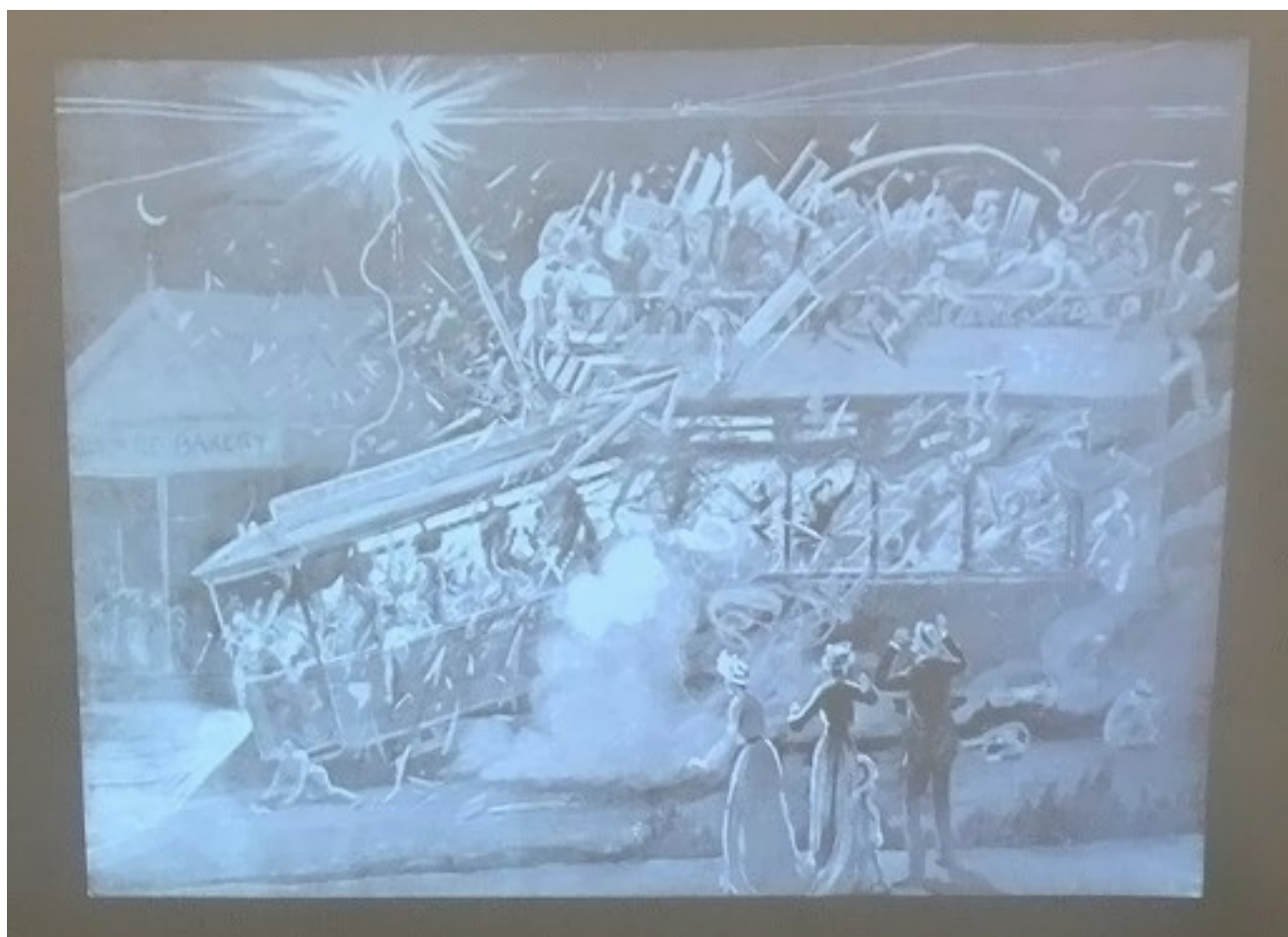
The network continued to expand (see the map of the final result below). At one point, Kingsland was the terminus, where civilisation literally ended:



Morningside was reached in the 1910s, Mount Albert in the 1920s and, finally, Avondale in 1931.

There were a number of accidents in the 54 years that the trams operated. The worst was the ‘Kingsland Runaway’, on Christmas Eve 1903. Queen Street retailers decided to take advantage of both novelties, electric trams and electric lighting, by having a third novelty, late-night shopping. It was all described at the time as being a ‘gay affair’ - not an expression you would use in this context today.

Trams brought huge crowds from all over. Double decker Number 39 left Kingsland at 8:10 pm with a full seated load. It picked up more passengers along New North Road, and soon had a packed standing load. All went well until it reached Eden Terrace, where it suffered a major brake failure and began running down Eden Terrace backwards. First the power pole, now pushed ahead rather than trailing behind, came away from the overhead wire, flailed around and fatally struck a young woman on the top deck on the head. The runaway tram then collided with another, following city-bound tram, fatally crushing two men standing on the rear staircase.



An artist’s impression of the crash ▲ and a photograph of the mangled result ▼



The two trams were towed to the Ponsonby Depot, where they were rebuilt and returned to service in about nine months. James noted that Christmas was a bad time for accidents in New Zealand – notably Tangiwai, in 1953.

The subsequent enquiry found that the training of the motormen was not always as thorough as it should have been. There was a standard procedure for stopping a runaway tram, involving throwing a switch which turned one of the two electric motors on the tram into a generator feeding power into the other motor. This ‘dynamic braking’ would soon bring the runaway to a stop. Unfortunately, the poorly-trained driver of Number 39 forgot what he was supposed to do.

Steps were taken to ensure that all motormen knew what to do in this situation. The Company even considered dropping double deckers. It asked the London head office what it should do and was told that it needed double deckers to move large crowds, so it should continue to use them, but to make sure that they were driven only by senior, experienced motormen.

For a fuller account of this tragedy, see James’s own detailed account, at http://www.kingslandnz.com/Portals/1/Kingsland_tram_accident_remembered.pdf.

Aucklanders in mid winter 1904 might have liked to think of their city as ‘Modern Auckland’:



Auckland may well have been as up-to-date as near-contemporary Kansas City (see <https://www.allmusicals.com/lyrics/oklahoma/kansascity.htm>) in terms of public transport – trams – but its muddy, unsealed roads left everything to be desired. The trams were liberally coated – inside and out – with the potent mix of mud and horse manure that were Auckland’s roads, putting the Company in constant conflict with the Council over the cleanliness of the trams. The Council appointed a ‘Traffic Inspector’, charged with monitoring the trams for cleanliness and who had the authority to send a dirty tram back to the Depot to be cleaned. On one day alone, he sent 22 of the 43 trams back to Ponsonby to be cleaned. The Company responded by stationing a man with a broom at the bottom of Queen Street, to sweep out the grime tramped into the trams by their passengers.

Keeping the outsides of the trams clean enough to satisfy the council was harder. The Company experimented with different colour schemes, to try to hide the exterior dirt. Council did not approve of the variety of colours. Eventually, in December 1906, the Company settled on a standard green and cream colour scheme for the exteriors of its trams.

Mud was a winter problem. Dust was just as big a nuisance in summer. Both residents and retailers complained to Council about the copious dust, which was the bane of their lives. The Tramways Company came to the rescue, with a sprinkler tram (Number 301), to spray water to settle the dust. This proved so successful in Auckland City that the Newmarket and Onehunga Councils also wanted it. The Company was happy to oblige, with two more sprinkler trams (302 and 303), which gave it another lucrative sideline.

Trams did not have it all their own way on Auckland's roads. Cars - 'horseless carriages' - were starting their rise to total mastery. The rules of the road, such as they were, were loosely interpreted:



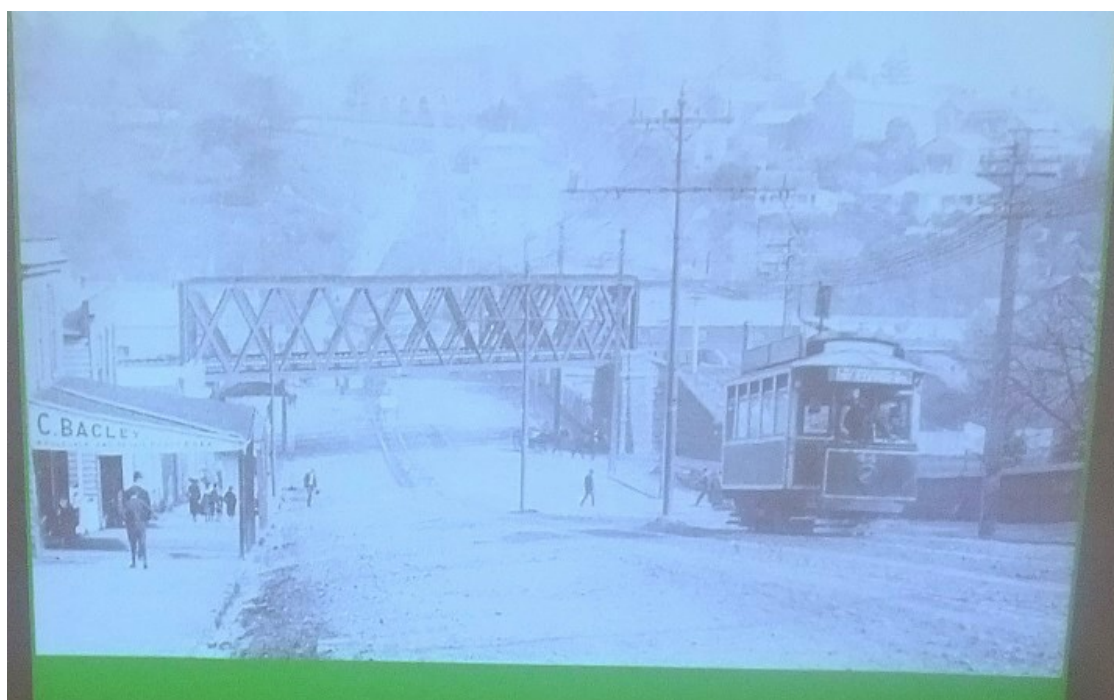
Pedestrians do not seem to have been any better behaved! Note that the double-decker tram has two conductors, one upstairs and one downstairs.

The trams were proving to be too popular for their own good. Their convenience encouraged so much growth in demand that the Company could not keep up: it did not have enough trams. By late 1905 ratepayers (i.e. voters) were complaining to the Council that they could not get rides because the trams were full, making them late for work (and having their pay docked). The Company responded by ordering, in early 1906, seven new trams (H Class), to be built on running gear from UK stock (therefore soon available) by local coachbuilders. However, the coachbuilders were too busy, and would not be able to meet the order until October. By May the Council had lost patience and demanded immediate action. It imposed a fine of £8 per day after 1 August if there were no new trams in service. The Company responded by building Tram Number 57 at the Ponsonby Depot. This came into service, with the paint still wet, just in time to avert Council's wrath. What the Council did not know was that Number 57 was using running gear cannibalised from Number 56, which was laid-up in the Depot. New running gear arrived from the UK in late August, and Number 56 was restored to service. A Ponzi Scheme with trams!

The Company also converted the Freight Tram (Number 44) into a passenger tram, on 1 December 1906. It was the freight trams running gear with a newly-built passenger body. Still Number 44, it was the first tram to sport the new green and cream livery. The freight body stayed on the blocks until about 1910, when it was given new running gear. As Number 300, it was used to carry spares and equipment between depots. The opening of the Onehunga Line in 1903 had made a second depot necessary, in Epsom. Number 44 remained a passenger tram.

Another shortage of trams loomed in 1907. The Company appealed to the London head office. Auckland was the only British Electric Traction Company subsidiary to make a profit, so London took notice. Another of its subsidiaries, The Metropolitan Tramway of London, happened to have four surplus trams. These arrived in Auckland in July 1907 and were immediately put into service. Only their identifying numbers were changed: they remained in their original red livery, so they known as 'the lobsters'.

The steepest part of the system was Parnell Rise:



Note the distinctive form of the Newmarket railway viaduct, before it was enclosed.

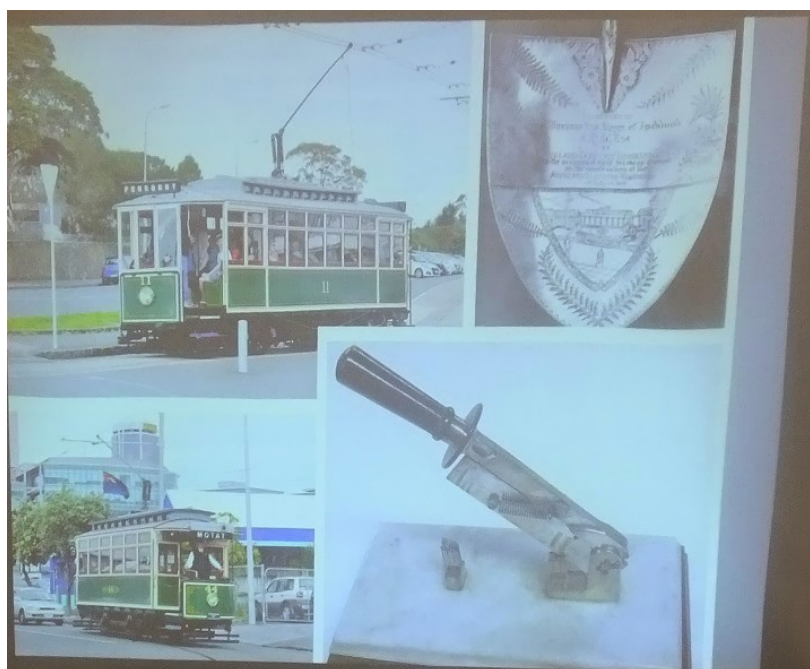
Another distinctive feature was the eponymous Three Lamps:

Originally gas-lit, they were converted to electricity.

In their heyday when this photo was taken in 1910, Council eventually decided that they were a traffic hazard, and they were removed in the 1920s.



The Company's fortunes deteriorated as World war I ended. By then Auckland had the only trams that were still privately owned in New Zealand: all the others being owned by the local city council. Auckland Council followed suit, and, on 1 July 1919, it became the proud owner of the entire Auckland tram system: for £1,200,000.

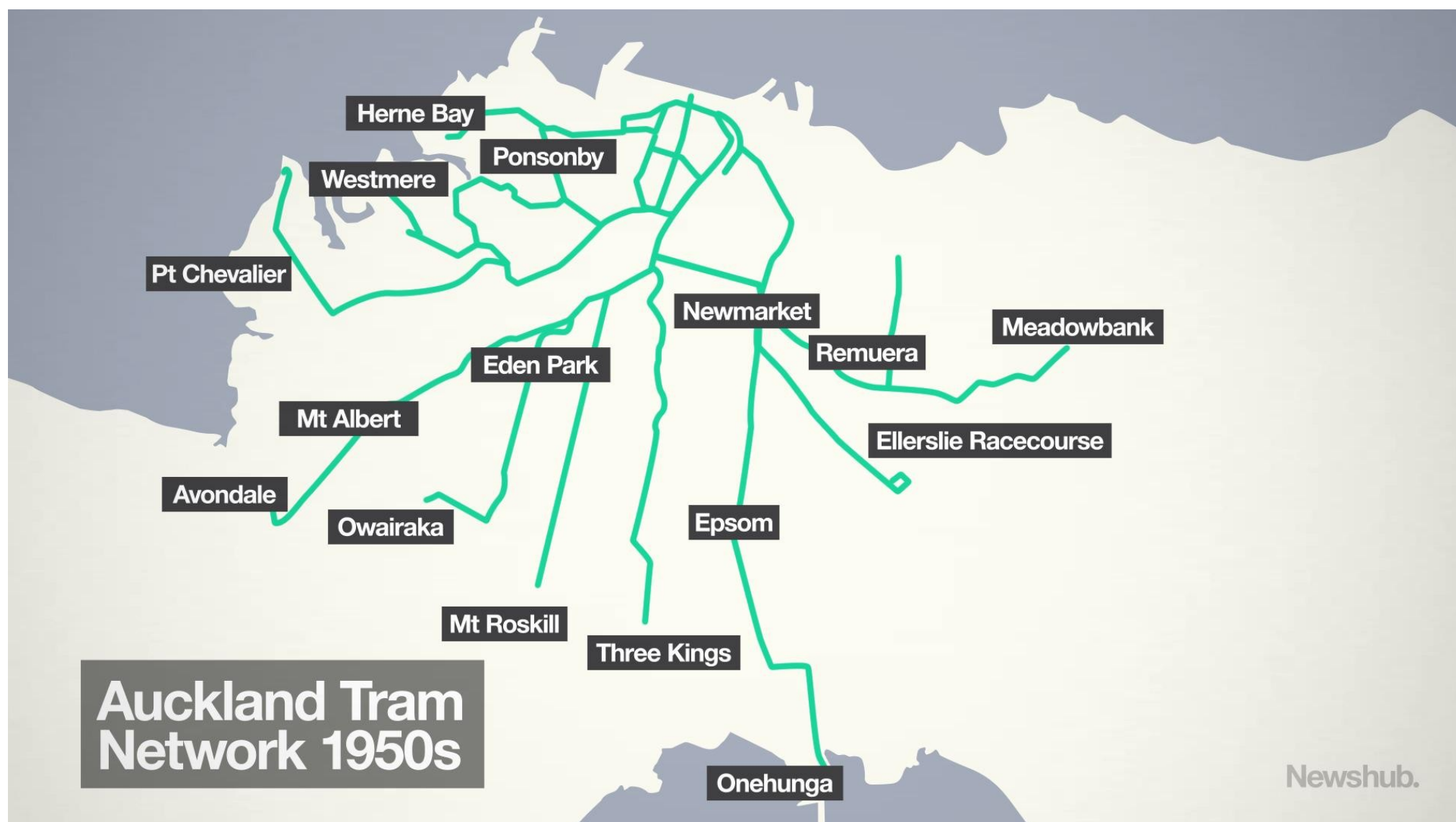


Some relics of Auckland's trams (clockwise from top left):

- Number 11, the first into service, now preserved as she was in 1912
- The shovel used to turn the first sod, on 1 August 1901. Also used, on 1 August 1977, to start the building of the extension of the MOTAT tramway along Great North Road
- The sterling silver knife switch used to open the power station in 1902. Also used to open the new electricity substation at MOTAT, which had previously serviced the trolley buses from Dominion Road
- The Freight Tram (Number 44) in its new life in Wynyard Quarter

This was Part 1 of James's presentation. After such a well-delivered informative and entertaining presentation, I am sure we will all be eagerly awaiting Parts 2 and 3, in March. Thank you, James.

For more on trams in New Zealand, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trams_in_New_Zealand. For more on the British side of it, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Electric_Traction. For an account of the Auckland Tram system see <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2018/01/the-trams-that-could-ve-stopped-auckland-s-traffic-nightmare.html>. This includes a map of the system:



Trevor Pollard observed that the Manukau Harbour used to be served by a ferry service that linked with the Onehunga trams.

Justin Griffith reminded us that our SuperGold Cards will get us into MOTAT for free. This includes free rides on the trams.

April's Guest Speaker will be **Bill Hohepa**, on *Fishing – How to Catch Fish*.

OUTINGS

Our February Coffee Morning was scheduled for Friday 21st, which happened to coincide with The New Lynn Mens Probus AGM (see above). Some of us also belong to Probus and, given the importance of that meeting for both clubs, wished to attend both. Therefore, February's Coffee Morning became Lunch at Dennys, New Lynn. 11 people attended. All were members of New Lynn Mens Probus, though some were also members of West Auckland Mens Rebus: there was no one who is a member of West Auckland Mens Rebus only. What happened, guys? Hardly in the spirit of togetherness we hope to engender.



I hope the sign is not a warning of things to come
As long as it does not tread on our dreams

For the numerate and keen-eyed amongst you, the invisible eleventh man, next to Bill, is me, behind the camera.

On Wednesday 26 15 members, family and friends enjoyed an extremely pleasant train and ferry trip to and from lunch at Pepperjacks, Pine Harbour. Beautiful weather, good food and convivial company. Outing Organizer Ian Smith took some photos:



◀ Am I really so photogenic? Or is this to compensate me for not being in the Dennys photo?

Vince and Pete ▼



◀ Not everyone could fit around the big table

Enjoying the view on the way back ▼



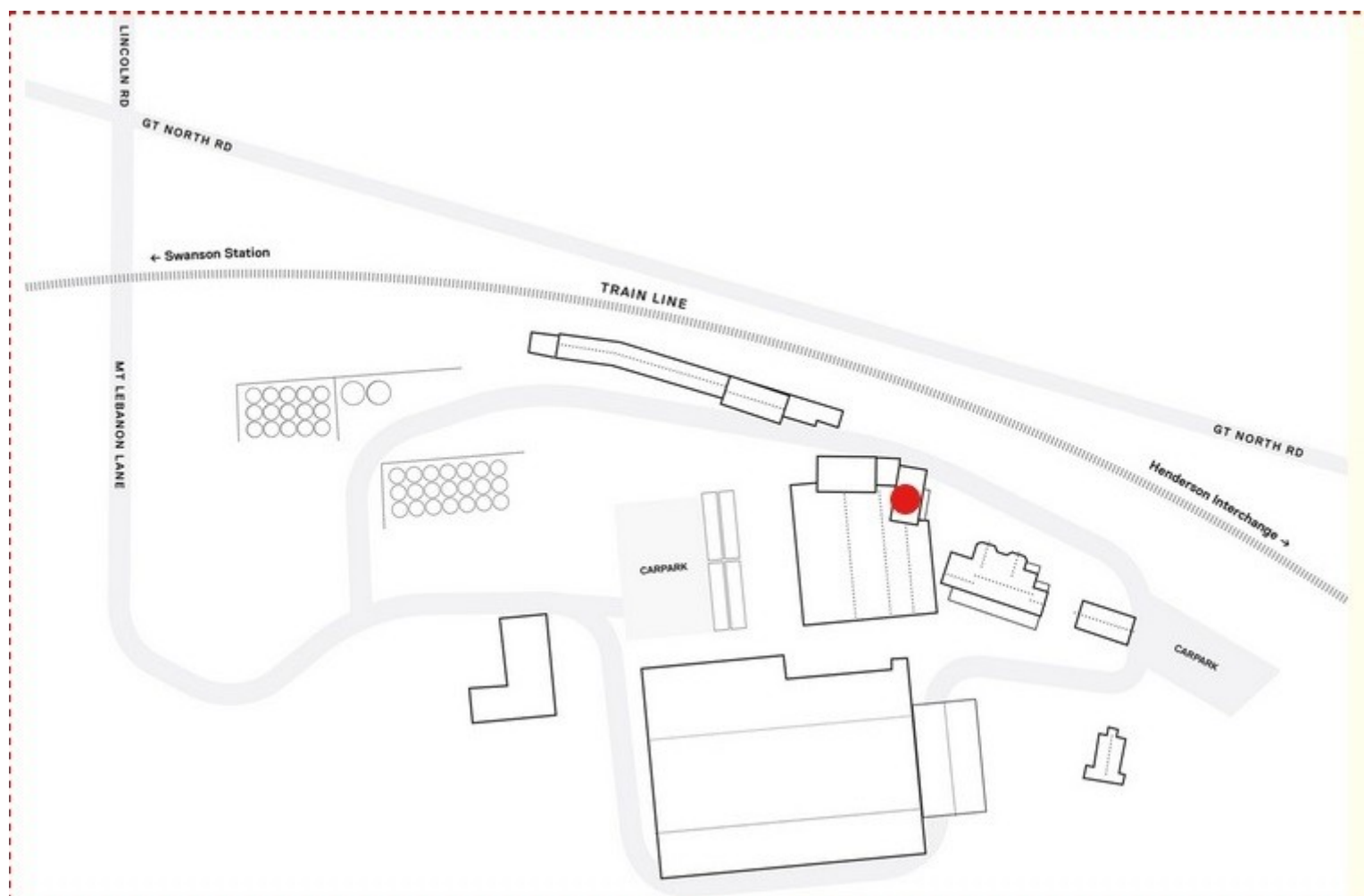
Thanks, Ian.



Also, from Vince Middeldorp, leaving Pine Harbour: two stalwarts and Ian’s son, Sanjay.

The next Coffee Morning will be at 10:30 in the Coffee Studio at the Corban Estate Art Centre (<https://ceac.org.nz/visit/>), 2 Mt Lebanon Lane, Henderson (off the junction of Great North, Swanson and Lincoln Roads).





EXTERNAL EVENTS

At the February meeting Ian mentioned dancing classes. These Hip Hop dancing classes are held at the Corbans Centre at 10 am every Friday. Each class lasts one hour and costs \$6. You do not have to come every week, just whenever you can make it.

This from the Macular Degeneration Society, if anyone is interested:

Macular Degeneration

Free Seminar

Learn about the impact of Macular Degeneration, medical research, treatments and resources available

Macular Degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in New Zealand, affecting 1 in 7 people over the age of 50.

Local Ophthalmologist, Dr Narme Deva, will share the latest information on treatments and the management of Macular Degeneration.

Bring your friends and family to this free educational seminar.

DATE:	Saturday 7 March 2020	Sponsored by
TIME:	10.00 am - 11.30 am	
VENUE:	Quality Hotel Lincoln Green 159 Lincoln Road Henderson	<small>Science For A Better Life</small>

To register call **0800 MACULA** (622 852) or email info@mdnz.org.nz



MACULAR DEGENERATION
NEW ZEALAND

www.mdnz.org.nz

If you need advise or help with your digital device (phone, laptop or whatever) **SeniorNet West Auckland** offers courses and Help Sessions. You do need to be a member to take a course, but the Help Sessions are available to all (a \$5 fee applies). The Help Sessions are held at its Learning Centre, upstairs in the Henderson RSA, on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month (10th and 24th on March), from 10 am to 11 am. One of the tutors should be able to help. You do need to get there by 11, though the tutor will stay with you later (until noon) if necessary. SeniorNet also has a monthly meeting, also open to the public, on the third Tuesday of the month (17th in March). This is at the Kelston Community Centre (in the same room that West Auckland Mens Rebus uses – or used to), from 10 am to noon. There is a speaker, often, but not necessarily, computer related, morning tea and a raffle (\$2 per ticket). If Henderson is not convenient, you can find other SeniorNet Learning Centres at <http://seniornet.co.nz/>.

OTHER

Vince Middeldorp has supplied this, on Vitamin D:

When I talked about the benefits of CoQ10, Ian Smith brought up the subject of vitamin D. Ian has also mentioned sunshine in connection with vitamin D.

In July 2012 *North and South* magazine ran a story titled *Should we swallow it?* It was about health supplements; the ones sold at supermarkets, pharmacies and health food stores.

The most interesting part of the article was a diagram that divided supplements into categories depending on the evidence to support them. Supplements for which there was strong, good and promising evidence, were placed above the worth it line. Supplements for which there was conflicting, slight or no evidence were placed below the worth it line.

Vitamin D was right at the top of the table. There was strong evidence that it improves general health and reduces mortality from all causes.

I doubt Ian Smith had osteoporosis in mind when he mentioned vitamin D, but the most compelling case for taking it and the reason vitamin D is available on prescription in a large once-a-month tablets, has to do with osteoporosis.

In 2010 the MidCentral District Health Board in partnership with ACC, began encouraging health care professionals to prescribe vitamin D to residents in aged care facilities. Between March 2010 and June 2012, the uptake of vitamin D by aged care residents increased from 15 to 74 percent.

Comparisons before and after the project showed a 32 per cent reduction in aged residential care residents going to the emergency department with falls related fractures, and a 41 percent reduction in their hospital admissions due to these fractures.

Of older people who suffer a hip fracture, nearly 20 percent die within a year. Half of those who walk without help before fracturing a hip, are unable to walk without assistance in the year following the fracture.

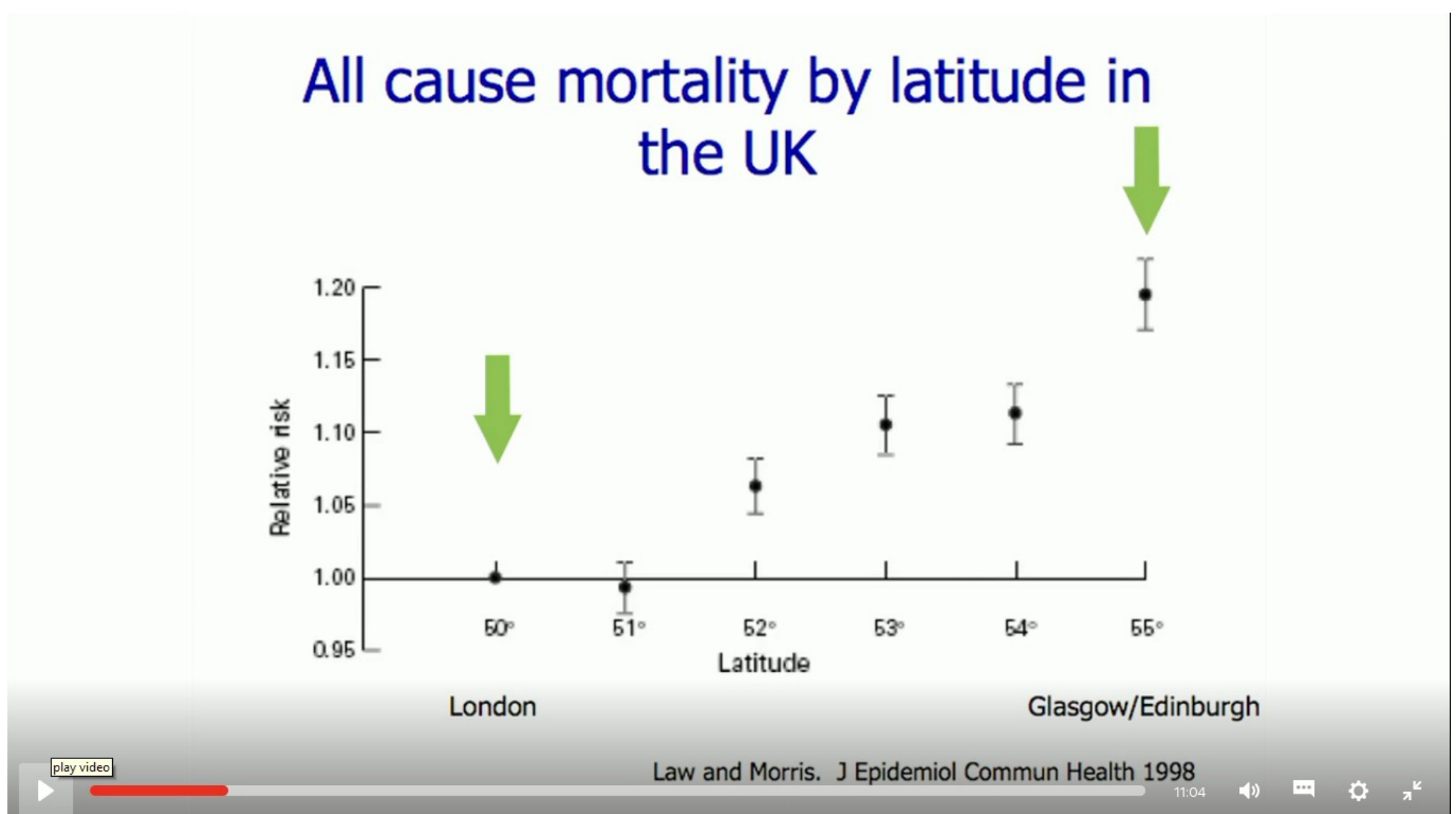
Ian Smith mentioning sunlight reminded me of Dr Richard Weller's TED talk titled, *Could the sun be good for your heart*.

Richard Weller is a dermatologist who says, "My day job is saying to people that you've got skin cancer, it's caused by sunlight, don't go in the sun." What he would like to say to his patients is "Deaths from heart disease are a hundred times higher than deaths from skin cancer. Go out in the sun because exposure to sunlight protects against heart disease."

One reason Richard Weller believes exposure to sunlight is beneficial is because Australians have about a third fewer deaths from heart attacks and heart failure and less strokes than people in the UK. In his TED talk he shows a graph with mortality figures in the UK by latitude. The further north from London people live, the higher the mortality (these figures were adjusted to take into account risk factors such as smoking, social class and diet).

It would be good if popping vitamin D pills was the same as going out in the sun, but that doesn't seem to be the case. The higher people's blood levels of vitamin D are, the less heart disease they have and the less cancer. However, if people take vitamin D supplements it doesn't change the high rate of heart disease.

Richard Weller postulates that high vitamin D levels is a marker for sunlight exposure and sunlight exposure is good for heart disease. He puts that down to sunlight releasing nitric oxide from materials such as nitrates stored in the skin. Nitric oxide lowers blood pressure by dilating blood vessels and stops angina by dilating coronary arteries.



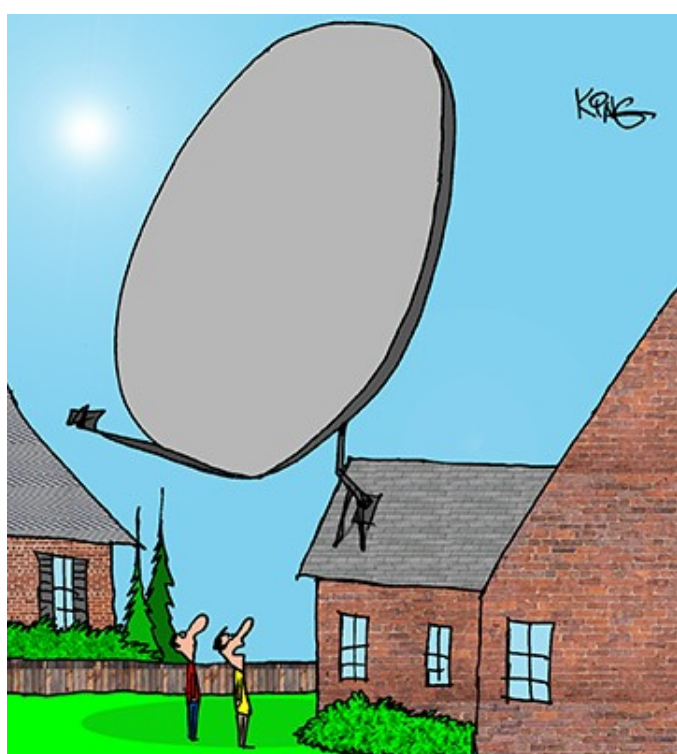


Thank you, Vince

You can download the Rebus Federation Constitution at <https://www.rebus.nz/documents>, where it is listed under *Rules of Rebus NZ*. It was originally intended to append it to this Newsletter, but 13 pages is too long.

If anyone has any views, opinions, information, requests or questions they want to share with members, please do not hesitate to send them to me, so that I can include them in the Newsletter.

COMIC CORNER



"I get 572,000 channels. I watch 4 of them."



"Yes, grandpa, I did say my friend was blowing up my phone. But that's just a figure of speech. So there's no reason to call the fire department."

Finally, something which I recently saw on a T-shirt, which we might all identify with:

IRONY
OPPOSITE OF WRINKLY

NEXT MEETING

As already noted, the next meeting will actually be next week, on Friday 13 March, at the New Lynn Friendship Hall. Because of Good Friday, the April meeting will be on Friday 24 April, not the 10th. Subsequent meetings will be on the second Friday of the month, at the New Lynn Friendship Hall.

For those of you who are not familiar with the New Lynn Friendship Hall, it is down the drive at 3063 Great North Road, New Lynn



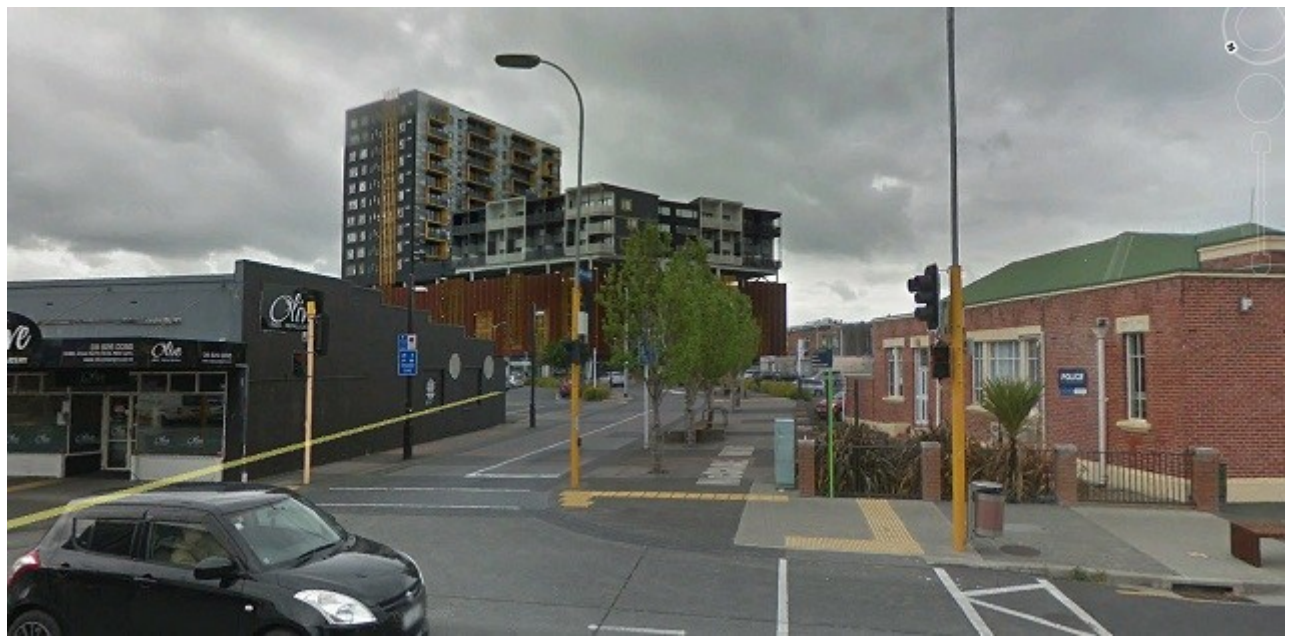
Coming along Great North Road from Kelston, turn left down the drive at the traffic lights by McCrae Way; coming from Avondale, turn right. If coming by public transport, walk along McCrae Way from the New Lynn Transport Centre, cross Great North Road, then down the drive. You can also approach from the back, along Hugh Brown Drive and McNaughton Way. There is plenty of parking around the Hall, and it is only about 5 minutes walk from the Transport Centre (train and buses).

Views from the traffic lights:

Looking down the drive
The Friendship Hall is the white roof in the far background.
The entrance to the room we use is at the far end



Looking along McCrae Way, towards the Transport Centre.



At the traffic lights, looking along Great North Road,
coming from Kelston.
The drive to the Hall is to the left.
McCrae Way is to the right.



At the traffic lights, looking along Great North Road,
coming from Avondale.
The drive to the Hall is to the right.
McCrae Way is to the left.



If you have any queries or problems with distribution, please raise them with Jack Morley (83 45763 or jmorley@xtra.co.nz). Jack is responsible for distribution, I for content. Any contributions are most welcome (<mailto:JohnMihaljevicNZ@gmail.com>).
John Mihaljevic (Newsletter Editor)