



# West Auckland Men's Rebus Club Newsletter

**February 2024**

**Next meeting: 10:00 am Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February, Friendship Hall, 3063 Great North Rd, New Lynn**

## COMMITTEE

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*The next coffee morning is at The Delicious Bistro 547 Te Atatu Road Friday 16th February at 10:00 am*

## **MEETING REPORT**

*January 2023*

**Chairperson: Bill Mutch**

**Attendance: 17 members plus 1 visitor**

Raymond Barrett, Neil Castle, John Corban, Mensto De Roos, Bill Fairs, Andrew Geddes, John McKeown, Vince Middeldorp, John Mihaljevic, Bill Mutch, Andrew Narayan, Charles Nicholls, Trevor Pollard, Ian Smith, Alan Verry, Ken Webster, Garrick Yearsley

### **1. Welcome and Attendance:**

The meeting commenced with a welcome to all attendees. Paul was acknowledged as the sole visitor present. Attendance was noted with individuals providing updates on apologies for absent members, including Lindsay Parris, Allan Williamson, Alan Babich, and Peter Cox.

### **2. Matters Arising:**

The meeting reviewed matters arising from the December meeting. Correspondences were found to be minimal, and there were no significant additions to the previous meeting's agenda.

### **3. Treasurer's Report:**

Charles Nicholls provided the treasurer's report. Notable highlights included a review of annual accounts and subscriptions due. The current financial standing was discussed, indicating a balance of \$709 online and \$692.06 in the savings account. Membership fees were encouraged to be paid promptly.

### **4. Upcoming Events and Activities:**

Ian Smith discussed upcoming club events, including a proposed coffee morning and a potential trip on the Jane Gifford in March or April. Interest was gauged among attendees for participation in these events.

### **5. JP Accountability and Funeral Planning:**

Charles Nichols addressed concerns regarding JP accountability and highlighted procedures in place to ensure proper conduct. Additionally, discussions on funeral planning were held, emphasizing the importance of shopping around for the best deals and proper protocols to follow in case of a death at home.

### **6. Future Meetings and Morning Tea:**

The next meeting was scheduled for February 9th, 2024. Morning tea was announced, allowing for a 29-minute break for attendees to refresh and socialize.

**Meeting Adjournment:** 10:34 am.

## **PRESIDENT'S PRATTLE**

### **President's Report February 2024**

*Bill Mutch*

Welcome to the second month of 2024. I hope you are all doing well and enjoying the new year.

Peter Cox is currently in the hospital. Trevor Pollard has been in touch with him and can give us an update.

We are saddened to hear of the passing of Ray Hancock, a long-time member of our club. Ray would have turned 100 on June 1st. Trevor Pollard and Alan Verry attended his funeral service. Vince will write a tribute for him in our newsletter.

We had a great meeting last month, and enjoyed three short presentations from our club members. They were all all interesting, and top marks were given.

As promised, I will share some tips and guidelines, should you be faced with the death of a loved one or a friend. This is a very difficult and stressful time. I hope this information will be helpful and supportive.

If someone dies, the first thing you should do is call the police or a funeral director. They will guide you through the next steps and provide you with the necessary paperwork and assistance.



*Bill Fairs and Bill Mutch at the January 2024 meeting*

If someone dies at home, which is often their preference, you can do the following things:

- Close their eyelids gently if you can.
- Arrange for their body to stay at home if you wish. This is a common and respectful practice.
- Shop around for funeral quotes, as prices can vary significantly. Remember that funeral directors are also salespeople.
- Choose between burial or cremation, depending on your preference and budget.
- Build or buy a casket. Simple caskets need not be expensive from a good funeral director. If you opt for cremation, choose a plain casket.
- Leave the digging of the grave to the professionals. Family can do the filling in if wished. This can be a meaningful gesture.
- Shop around for headstones, as prices can vary a lot.

You do not have to embalm the body. It is an expensive and unnecessary procedure. If the person died in an accident, a funeral director can prepare the body to look presentable, but if you do not want to view the body, you can request a sealed casket and remember them as you last saw them.

It is common now to be cremated as quickly as possible and hold a memorial service later.

You can add ashes to an old grave, but you will need a funeral director to do this and there will be a cost involved. Some graves have a legal term that prevents them from being disturbed, so check this before you decide.

You can buy cemetery plots at any cemetery office, but they are expensive. Check the office hours before going to the cemetery office.

Wills are important documents that help distribute the money and assets of the deceased according to their wishes. Family must know about the will: where it is located and who is the executor.

Children should always be told the truth about death, as this will help them understand and cope with the loss. Pets can be a good way to introduce the concept of death and grief to children.

If someone tells you what they want to happen when they die, always write it down in front of them and keep it in a safe place. This will ensure that their wishes are respected and honoured.

My favourite verse: Do not look sad when I die but smile that I have been alive.

## ***Claudia's Corner***

What do Olympic Sprinters eat before a race?  
Nothing they fast!

What goes up but never comes down?  
Your age.

What do you get when you cross a snake with a pie?  
A Pie-Thon

Working in a Mirror factory is something  
I can see myself doing!



## ***CLUB SPEAKERS***



***VINCE MIDDELDORP***

## ***DISCOVERING THE UNLIKELY JOY OF BEING A STOREMAN***

*Transcribed by WhisperAI; Written by Microsoft Copilot AI*

A telephone exchange technician is someone who installs, maintains, and repairs the equipment that connects telephone calls. I worked as one for five years.

The work revolved around BPO (British Post Office) 2000 selectors. These devices would route calls through the telephone exchange, depending on the number dialed. They were mounted on racks and could be easily removed and replaced.



*Telephone exchange selectors*

I worked at various Auckland telephone exchanges, including Avondale, New Lynn, Titirangi, Glen Eden, Whenuapai, Te Atatu, and Birkdale. I always had to be on-site by 8 am. Sometimes, reaching the exchange required catching two buses.



*Technician working in a telephone exchange*

There were some memorable moments. One was fixing a tricky fault at the Waitemata City Council building. Another was identifying an error on a wiring diagram at Tony De Geest Timber.

The Waitemata City Council building on Greys Avenue housed a small telephone exchange for staff communication. I was called in one day to rectify a fault on an incoming line that would disconnect whenever a call was answered. The staff informed me that the fault seemed to move from line to line as different technicians attempted to fix it.

I realized that the other technicians had merely swapped the selectors around. I removed the faulty selector, identified the problem and fixed it. I then installed the faulty selector on line 1.

Line 1 was the first one to receive incoming calls. If line 1 was busy, the next call would go to line 2, and so on. By putting the faulty selector in line 1, I risked cutting off all incoming calls to Waitemata City Council. There were never any complaints; so I must have fixed the fault.



*Waitemata City Council building in Grey's Avenue*

Tony De Geest Timber had a radio-telephone system for communication with their truck driver, a necessity in the pre-cellphone era. The system was far from perfect, requiring the driver to listen attentively for incoming calls and manually activate the microphone to respond.

My task was to install additional equipment to enable everyone with an extension phone to call the truck driver on the radio-telephone. Despite my best efforts, I struggled to get it to work properly.

It was following a break for a game of 500 at morning tea, when I worked at Avondale Telephone Exchange, that I often found the solution to difficult problems.

Facing a problem I couldn't solve at Tony De Geest Timber, I decided to take a break. I drove to a nearby dairy and treated myself to an ice cream. Upon returning, I discovered a drafting error on the wiring diagram. Once I had the RT system functioning correctly, I informed my boss about my finding.

He was sceptical, stating that the diagram had been used for a long time and no one had ever complained about it. Determined to prove him wrong, I filled out a suggestion form and sent it to the head office in Wellington. They verified my claim and rewarded me with a ten-dollar cheque. It wasn't much, but it was enough to validate my assertion.

One day, I was informed that I would be working in the installation storeroom at Remuera. The prospect of such a job, devoid of equipment installation or fault fixing, seemed unappealing. I felt as if they considered me unfit for anything other than storeroom duty, and I contemplated quitting.

Nevertheless, I complied with the order and reported to the storeroom. My daily routine involved catching a train from Avondale to Newmarket in the mornings and walking up to the lower slopes of Mt Hobson.



*The installation storeroom (the three grey coloured joined together buildings on the left) and the Remuera Telephone Exchange (large white building). The grassy area on the right is Mt Hobson Domain.*

Upon arrival at the storeroom, I would chat with Jean and Mary, who were busy wiring up relay sets. We would all take a break for morning tea, after which I would converse with Ivan Prosser, who was always clad in a khaki overcoat and sat behind a half door, allowing him to pass things out without letting anyone in.

After a lengthy lunch hour, I would often talk to Mick Parsons, the sign writer. On hot days, someone would buy ice creams from the dairy across the road. Our boss, Gerald Blokland, was a wonderful man whom I later worked for at Glen Eden Exchange.

Reflecting on the various jobs I held throughout my career, this one stood out for its lack of pressure, stress, and workload. Yet, it was rich in shared moments, forged bonds, and engaging conversations.

Being transferred to the Remuera storeroom was an enlightening experience. It taught me a valuable lesson that many can probably relate to: even when things seem to be going wrong, they often turn out for the best.

## **CLUB SPEAKERS**



**TREVOR POLLARD**

### **THE PLUMBER'S SECRET**

*Transcribed by WhisperAI; Written by Microsoft Copilot AI*

Having been a plumber for 65 years, most people are aware of my profession. So, the sight of a poster in my office featuring a male and female model in the shower might raise eyebrows. This poster has been a silent companion in my office for over four decades, its drawing pins stubbornly embedded for so long that a knife was needed for their removal.



*German industrialist Friedrich Grohe (Junior) son of the founder of Grohe AG*

Let me introduce you to Friedrich Grohe, the world's largest and arguably finest tap manufacturer. The impeccable chrome finish and superior German engineering of his products were a delight to work with.

My job often took me to hospitals to rectify the settings on Grohe valves, which hospital plumbers frequently mishandled. These valves, equipped with a mixing valve and thermostat, were so finely tuned that they could regulate water temperature to within plus or minus one degree. Despite my best efforts to educate the hospital plumbers, they, being staunch unionists, seemed to harbour some resentment towards me.

At one point in my life, I transitioned from being a self-employed plumber to an employee of the Paterson Trading Company, importers of Grohe tapware into New Zealand. The company was founded by Desmond Paterson, a squadron leader and pilot during the Second World War, and was now under the stewardship of his adopted son, Hamish Paterson.

Hamish confided in me about his exhaustion, a sentiment stemming from a series of personal tragedies. His sister Linda and mother Mary Paterson had tragically lost their lives on Mount Erebus, and his father Desmond passed away about a year later.

Linda had recently graduated as a teacher and secured a position at one of Auckland's top decile schools. To celebrate, Mary had planned a trip to Antarctica and even considered bringing young Hamish along. However, Desmond, having experienced the perils of white-out conditions during his service, deemed the trip too risky.



*Hamish Paterson*



*Linda Paterson*

Given my deep-rooted connection with his family and the company, I chose to work for them, despite my initial reservations.

Shortly after I joined Paterson Trading, Grohe discontinued their fancy brochures.

Hamish Paterson, the young man, then approached me with an unusual request: “Can you rig up a three-meter-square shower box? We need to install it in the basement of a photographer’s warehouse.” It had to do with Paterson Trading needing to produce a brochure for their Grohe shower ware products.

The shower box was constructed from 12-inch x 1-inch boards and had a slightly sloping floor. There were two sheets of Perspex set up to prevent water from drenching me.

The challenge lay in the twelve valves I had to manipulate swiftly. The photographer wanted various shots—one with side showers, another featuring a slide shower, and yet another showcasing a metal head shower (which, incidentally, is the same one I have at home).

Equipped with a tank and a reticulating system connected to two thirty-gallon hot water cylinders set just below thirty degrees, I aimed for an optimal showering temperature.

Before we began, I asked the old German photographer, “How long will this photo shoot take?” His response: “Twenty minutes, that’s all.”

After forty minutes, the young girl shown in the poster turned to me and said, “Trevor, the water’s getting cold.” I had to think quickly—she couldn’t know that the water spraying over both of them was continuously recirculating.

We eventually had to pause the shoot because the water temperature just dropped too much. During our break, we all sat together on the stage with this gorgeous girl. You’ve got no idea. There was a lady present, likely from the union or a modelling agency, who had to be there when individuals exposed themselves. We had all been required to produce police record clearances. My son had asked about joining us, but I declined his request.

Shortly after the photo shoot resumed, the photographer exclaimed, ‘Oh, God, too many beauties!’ On hearing that, the male model promptly closed his legs to conceal his private parts—a clever move that I doubt I could have executed myself.



We persisted for another hour before the photo shoot was finally called off. Because of all the showering, moisture had permeated the air in the room, causing photos and papers to fall off the walls.



*Trevor Pollard and John Corban hold up the poster from the photo shoot*

It was really fun working for the Paterson Trading. They not only held import licenses, which enabled them to buy Grohe products, but they also had import licenses for other products, including crystal.

The situation at Paterson Trading changed when Hamish married a girl who was having an affair with a land agent.

She operated the telex machine and changed all the orders. I then had to deal with architects and plumbers who were coming in and what we had wasn't for them. In that situation, you had to tell a few white lies.

It wasn't my scene, so I had to walk out and I ended up plumbing again.

### **CLUB SPEAKERS**



**NEIL CASTLE**

### **BRICKS & BROTHERHOOD: ADVENTURES OF THE CASH BROTHERS AND ME**

*Transcribed by WhisperAI; Written by Microsoft Copilot AI*

In the heart of Westmere, I grew up with two inseparable companions, the Cash brothers, Alan and Peter. Their home on Lemington Road was my second home until I turned 17.

Alan and Peter were a dynamic duo, joining forces with the Curry Cowboys, a group of young men known for their leather jackets, neck scarves, and gleaming Triumph motorbikes. The Cash brothers were regulars on Queen Street, living life on the wild side after work hours.

My family, in contrast, was the epitome of tranquillity and propriety, where alcohol was a stranger. The Cash residence, however, was a different story. Their father, Togo Cash, was a connoisseur of spirits. Every weekend, a 5-gallon keg of beer found its way into their home, and Togo and his friends would relish it.

Togo Cash had another intriguing habit. He ran an illegal raffle, known as tote tickets, from his dining room table. The winners were determined by the TAB turnover figure in the 8 O'Clock, a Saturday night newspaper. I often found myself assisting them in mixing up the tote tickets.

One day, Alan and Peter announced their plans to move to Canada. The idea seemed radical to me. On their last night in New Zealand, as I watched them pack their suitcases, I was inspired. If they could embark on such an adventure, why couldn't I?

The very next day, I visited the Union Steam Ship company to book my passage. Due to the country's shortage of overseas funds, I had to wait 12 months and migrate rather than simply holidaying. And so, I did. I secured my passport, migrated, and found myself in Vancouver.

Finding a job was my next challenge. I approached the local union, armed with my membership card from the Bricklayers Union in New Zealand. As luck would have it, they had a job opening at the northern end of Vancouver Island. The original candidate couldn't make it, and I was offered the position. It was my first stroke of good fortune in my new home."

I was sent to a renowned firm in Vancouver, Maxwell Construction. They were the primary contractors for a significant project - a radar station funded by both the Canadian and American governments. This project was a lucrative venture for them.

Maxwell Construction provided me with a chit, which I presented to the boat company. This led to a picturesque overnight boat journey to the northern end of Vancouver Island.

As a union member, I was treated with utmost respect: top-notch food, accommodation, and service. I had a spacious cabin all to myself, complete with a double bed and a wall full of buttons. Being a country boy from New Zealand, my curiosity got the better of me. I pressed one of the buttons, and to my surprise, a steward promptly knocked on the door, ready to cater to my needs.

We sailed through the night, and the next day, we navigated between Vancouver Island and the mainland. The sea breeze was refreshing, and the sight of enormous log rafts was a testament to the thriving timber business. These rafts, held together by chains, often broke loose in rough weather, leading to a flurry of logs and subsequent salvage operations.

Our journey continued until we reached Port Hardy, the northernmost port on Vancouver Island. From there, we boarded a bus and crossed the island, reminiscent of the journey from Auckland to Onehunga. On the other side was Coal Harbour, a place with an unbearable stench from a whaling station, the last of its kind in British Columbia before it closed in 1967.



*Truck loaded with cartons of whale meat from the whaling station at Coal Harbour*

We waited for a few hours before a large speedboat arrived to transport us and a few other workers to the construction site at Quatsino Sound.

At the end of the Sound, there was a village with an engineering workshop, a picture theatre, and other facilities.

We reached the camp well past midnight. The next morning, I explored the place. The radar station, destined to be managed by the Air Force, had comfortable houses built for the officers. I was assigned one of these houses, complete with a concrete floor, central heating, and a bed. The best part? I didn't have to make my bed in the morning, as the staff would tidy up the place and make the bed for me.

Breakfast was a feast for the eyes. I had never seen such an abundance of food. Hotcakes, or flapjacks as they were called, were piled high on plates, accompanied by strips of bacon and a generous drizzle of maple syrup. The workers would create towering stacks of food, a sight that was truly mouthwatering.

Lunch was a packed meal, prepared after breakfast. The bread was pre-buttered, and there was a variety of meats and cheeses to choose from, along with fresh fruit. Accompanied by a thermos flask, we would then be transported to the job site, located six miles up a hill, where the radar station was being built.



*The radar station at the northern end of Vancouver Island*

My task was to construct a chimney for a large boiler. The chimney was designed with flue liners, surrounded by cardboard. This allowed for a gap between the flue liner and the brickwork when filled with concrete, accommodating heat expansion.

During my time at the radar station, news broke of Ed Hillary's successful ascent of Mount Everest. Being a New Zealander, my colleagues assumed I knew Hillary personally.

While I can't recall my exact pay, I do remember that in just about two weeks, I earned enough to afford a first-class flight from Vancouver back to New Zealand. Such earnings were unheard of for a bricklayer back home.

The job site was a tight-knit community. Gambling and alcohol were prohibited, and after about six months of work, the workers would have saved a considerable sum. Some would spend their earnings in Vancouver, return broke, and then work for another six months.

My friends, Alan and Peter Cash, had moved to Canada a year before me. They had settled in Toronto with two other blokes from Auckland. I decided to join them, forwarding my baggage to Toronto and keeping only my backpack with me.

I travelled from Vancouver to Calgary on the Canadian National Railway, taking a detour to explore a park filled with dinosaur remains. From Calgary, I took a Grey Line bus, the most economical mode of transport, to Toronto.

The journey was a continuous ride, day and night. During one of our stops, I realized my wallet, containing money and my passport, was missing. I asked the man sitting next to me to stand, and to my surprise he was sitting on it. He had slipped it out of my pocket while I was asleep.

Our route took us through the United States, passing through Minneapolis-St Paul, and finally reaching Chicago. I spent a night at a bus station, sleeping on a wooden bench below ground level.

The following day, I caught a bus to Toronto, where I reunited with the Cash brothers.



*The Port of Toronto, situated on Lake Ontario, is Toronto's gateway to the St. Lawrence Seaway*

The Cash brothers and two other Kiwi boys were renting the first floor of a charming old house. As luck would have it, a room had just become available, which I could move into.

One of the boys, Bernie Hill, was a photographer, and another was a knitting machine mechanic. I had brought with me newspaper clippings from the Herald, showcasing the plentiful job opportunities in New Zealand. They were astounded, as finding work in Toronto was quite challenging.

While I was a union member during my time on Vancouver Island, the rest of my stay in Canada required non-union work. The wages weren't high, and every dollar earned was hard-fought.

Yet, the money I earned in an hour was enough for a three-course meal at a local restaurant. With an extra dime (10 cents), I could even afford a pack of 20 cigarettes. Such luxuries were unheard of for a bricklayer's hourly wage in New Zealand. Additionally, cars were surprisingly affordable.

Life with the Cash boys was a constant celebration with more than a fair share of alcohol. We often hosted booze parties, inviting South Africans and Aussies over.

Our landlady, Mrs Sobczak, would occasionally reprimand us for being too noisy. However, the sight of the rent money quickly changed her tune.

During part of the winter, I worked on constructing the basement of a church in Toronto. The cold was so intense that the mortar had to be mixed in a large metal tub over a fire. The water in the mortar would crystallize after laying just two concrete blocks, making it difficult for the mortar to stick properly.

The concrete blocks in Toronto were significantly heavier than those in New Zealand. Our blocks were made from scoria and sand, or pumice and sand, and were relatively light. In contrast, the blocks in Toronto were made from river shingle and sand. They were also much wider.

Back then, I was quite lean, a result of hard work, insufficient food, and perhaps too much alcohol. The heavy blocks were a challenge to handle and nearly crippled me.

Work was sporadic. Once a job was completed, we were told to pack up our tools and wait for the next job. During these periods of unemployment, I relied on my unemployment registration booklet. It was a cardboard booklet with my registration number stamped on a piece of aluminium. The employer would add stamps to the booklet proportional to the wages paid. If unemployed, I could take this booklet to the unemployment office and receive a certain amount of money based on the number of stamps in the booklet.

Moving to Canada was the beginning of many marvellous overseas adventures for me, all thanks to meeting the Cash brothers.

## OUTINGS AND TRIPS



*The Delicious Bistro has an attractive outdoor area at the back of the shop*

**Coffee Morning at The Delicious Bistro:** Our next coffee morning will be held at The Delicious Bistro, located at 547 Te Atatu Road, just past McDonald's in Te Atatu North and before the Bella Vista apartment block. The coffee morning is on Friday, 16th February; exactly one week after our February meeting. As usual, we'll start at 10 am.

**Sightseeing Trip on the Jane Gifford:** The 2 hour sightseeing trip on the Jane Gifford, is set for Wednesday the 13th of March. The bus will leave St John Hall at 9:00 am. The river boat trip (we are not going out to sea) will hopefully start at 10:30 am. The total cost, including the bus fare to Warkworth, is \$50.

We will have time in the township for coffee and something to eat, before getting back on the bus at 2:00 pm for the trip home; arriving back about 3:00 pm.

Please make your payments as soon as possible. This will allow us to pay a non-refundable deposit. The cut-off date for payments is Wednesday, 21st February. Payments can be made to the combined clubs bank account: 12 3232 0318628 00.



*The Jane Gifford was relaunched on 16 May 2009 and is moored at the Walkworth Wharf*

## **IN MEMORIAM: RAY HANCOCK**

It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of our esteemed member, Ray Hancock, on 19th January 2024. Ray joined our club in March 2005 and remained an active member until his resignation due to ill health in March 2022. In his resignation letter, Ray expressed his fondness for the club, writing, "I have enjoyed my association with the club and wish the club every success for the future."

Ray was a remarkable individual who nearly reached the milestone of 100 years of age, falling short by just four months and 13 days. He served as the membership coordinator of the Railway Enthusiasts Society until the age of 96. Upon his retirement, Bill Mutch humorously remarked, "Wouldn't you think he would have left it until he was 100."

In 2021, Ray experienced a complete heart block at home and was subsequently fitted with a pacemaker. Despite some initial fatigue, he managed to maintain his health with regular visits to the heart clinic.

Ray initially resided at 38 McFadzean Drive in Blockhouse Bay. When he could no longer live independently, he moved to the Murray Halberg Village in Lynfield.

Despite his age, Ray exhibited little to no cognitive decline. Bill Mutch described him as a, "living computer." He was often the first to answer questions during Tom Miller's quiz sessions at the club, impressing all with his sharp mind. His keen intellect was also invaluable to Bill Mutch in balancing the membership subscription accounts at the Railway Enthusiasts Society.

Before his retirement, Ray was a pharmacist with a shop in Mt Albert. He is survived by his two daughters, Christine and Susan. His wife, Doreen, predeceased him.

Ray passed away peacefully in the hospital at the retirement village. In his last phone call with Bill Mutch, he expressed his readiness for rest, saying, "Bill, I've had enough."

We remember Ray for his contributions to our club and his enduring spirit.



*Ray Hancock in the cab of Ww644 at Glenbrook Vintage Railway.  
Locomotive Ww644 entered service in 1915 and is still running.*

## **SUPPORTERS**



***The March meeting date is Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024***

Our meetings are at 10:00 am, **2nd Friday of the month**, New Lynn Friendship Hall, 3063 Great North Rd.