



West Auckland Men's Rebus Club Newsletter

May 2024

Next meeting: 10:00 am Friday 10th May, Friendship Hall, 3063 Great North Road, New Lynn

COMMITTEE

President	Bill Mutch	president@rebuswestauckland.nz	817 4721
Vice-President	Noel Rose	noelrose1976@gmail.com	828 1305
Immediate Past President	Bill Fairs	bill.fairs@gmail.com	627 8297
Secretary	Vince Middeldorp	secretary@rebuswestauckland.nz	828 5250
Treasurer	Charles Nicholls	treasurer@rebuswestauckland.nz	6293816
Outings	Ian Smith	ismith435@gmail.com	027 4549343
Newsletter	Vince Middeldorp	editor@rebuswestauckland.nz	828 5250
Speakers	Noel Rose	noelrose1976@gmail.com	828 1305
Hospitality	Trevor Pollard		817 8822
Attendance	Stephen David	sj david55@gmail.com	021641717
Webmaster	Vince Middeldorp	vince@rebuswestauckland.nz	828 5250
Photographer	John Mihaljevic	john@rebuswestauckland.nz	098361504



Andrew Narayan, Ian Smith, John Mihaljevic and Trevor Pollard at the Mitre 10 Lincoln Rd coffee morning

MEETING REPORT

April 2024

Chairman: Bill Mutch

Attendance: 21 members

Raymond Barrett, Neil Castle, John Corban, Stephen David, Vince Dennehy, Mensto De Roos, Maurice Forbes, John McKeown, Robert King, Vince Middeldorp, John Mihaljevic, Bill Mutch, Andrew Narayan, Charles Nicholls, Lyndsay Parris, Trevor Pollard, Noel Rose, Ian Smith, Ken Watson, Allan Williamson, Garrick Yearsley.

1. Welcome and Apologies:

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by Bill Mutch, who welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were noted for Alan Verry, who was away in the South Island, and for Bill Fairs and Andrew Geddes.

2. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting:

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.



Maurice Forbes chatting with Bill Mutch during the tea break at the April meeting

3. Correspondence:

Vince Middeldorp informed the attendees that correspondence had been received from Rebus, including information about their upcoming AGM in Tauranga. Attendees were encouraged to consider attending, as the agenda included various activities, such as sightseeing tours and a dinner at the RSA.

4. Treasurer's Report:

Charles Nicholls provided the treasurer's report, noting that there were no significant issues with the finances. It was proposed to close an account with a balance of one cent to streamline operations. The motion to close the account was moved by Charles Nicholls, seconded by Trevor Pollard, and unanimously approved by attendees.

5. Grant Applications:

Discussion ensued regarding potential grant applications, with an emphasis on the need for specific projects to increase the likelihood of success. Vince Middeldorp highlighted past success in securing funding for hall-related projects and expressed cautious optimism about future applications.

6. Events and Activities:

Plans were discussed for upcoming events and activities, including a coffee morning on the 26th of April and a proposed trip to Warkworth Museum on the 22nd of May. Attendees expressed enthusiasm for the planned activities.

7. Next Month's Speaker:

Noel Rose said a guest speaker had not yet been confirmed for the next meeting, but there were several prospects under consideration. [Update: Noel Rose has advised us that [Giuseppe Gallina](#) will be speaking on *Mussolini the inventor of Fascism*]

8. Presentation by Trevor Pollard:

Trevor Pollard gave a presentation on the trip to Warkworth and the Mahurangi River excursion on the Jane Gifford, providing insights and anecdotes about the experience.

PRESIDENT'S PRATTLE **President's Report May 2024**

Bill Mutch

Greetings to all,

As we transition into the cooler months, I hope this newsletter finds you well. Our meeting hall boasts excellent heating, ensuring our gatherings remain cosy and comfortable despite the chill outside.

In recent weeks, I've been reminded of the sombre realities of life, particularly in my role as a funeral celebrant. It's with a heavy heart that I reflect on the tragic loss of two young souls in driveway accidents.

One child, just 18 months old, innocently played on the driveway while a family member reversed their car. In a heartbreaking moment, the little one's life was cut short.

While cameras can offer assistance, they're not infallible. Let's all take a moment to pause and check our surroundings before moving, for nothing is more urgent than safeguarding precious lives.

I am pleased to report that no one among us is currently unwell, and we have not experienced any losses.

Remember, you are always welcome to bring someone along to our meetings. We pride ourselves on being a friendly bunch, and I look forward to seeing you all at our next meeting.

Warm regards,
Bill Mutch

Claudia's Corner

I have a twin brother
We used to be womb mates.

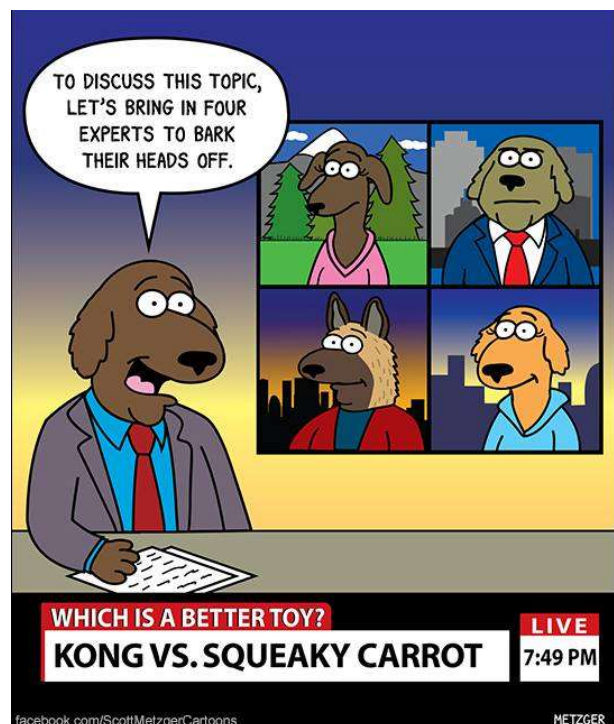
Do not worry if you miss a gym session
Everything will work out!

A friend of mine collects blunt pencils
I cannot see the point in it.

What do you call a sad strawberry?
A Blueberry.

What's the stupidest animal in the jungle?
A polar bear

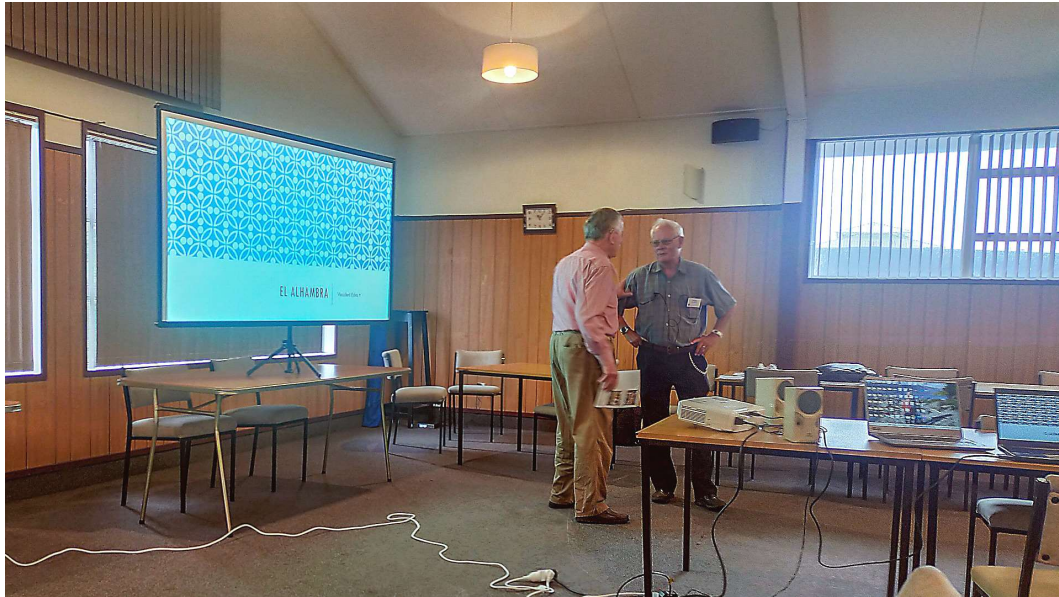
Enjoy Claudia



**FROM POMEGRANATES TO PALACES:
A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY AND HERITAGE IN SPAIN**

GUEST SPEAKER CHARLES NICHOLLS

Whisper AI & ChatGPT AI



Noel Rose talking with Charles Nicholls prior to his presentation on The Alhambra

As I stand here, a pomegranate rests on the table in front of me. They cost about \$4 each and my wife therefore insists I refrain from cutting it up. It's a versatile ingredient, perfect in salads, marinades, and a myriad of other dishes. It's considered a delicacy in the Middle East, a symbol of Spain, and is recognised in many other parts of the world. I promise to revisit the pomegranate later, as it holds a wealth of biblical and historical connections.

I've always had a penchant for travel. While I wouldn't call myself a globetrotter, I've made a few trips around the world. My fascination lies in buildings and monuments, the silent storytellers of history. Take St. Peter's in Rome and the Sistine Chapel, for instance. They stand as magnificent testaments to European art and culture. I admire the fact that figures like the Popes and the Medicis patronized the arts, enabling such grandeur to exist.

However, the other side of the coin reveals a darker truth. The wealth that funded these arts, the forced labour that built these monuments - they paint a less glamorous picture. This duality isn't unique to Europe. The Egyptian pharaohs and their pyramids share a similar story.

This brings me to The Alhambra. More than just a building, it reflects both the light and shadow of humanity. In 2016, my wife Helen and I visited The Alhambra, a long-standing item on our bucket list. We rented an apartment across the valley, directly opposite this architectural marvel.

Picture this: Helen and I, in Spain, in the late spring. The temperature hovers around 32 degrees. We've just returned from a long walk to the gypsy caves, tired but fulfilled. We step onto the balcony, wine glasses in hand, and there it is - The Alhambra, beautifully floodlit against the night sky.

A poignant memory from that trip was of my late father-in-law. He had always wanted to make this journey, but never got the chance. Thanks to modern technology, we could share our view of The Alhambra with him back in Dunedin. It was an emotional moment for us.

The Alhambra, a monument of Islamic architecture, stands atop a hill. Its strategic location suggests it was used for defence. In winter, the surrounding hills would be blanketed in snow, providing a vital resource to the hot climate - water. This is the story of why this place was founded, why it flourished.



The Alhambra, beautifully floodlit against the night sky

In this narrative, I use the term 'Moorish' rather than 'Arab' or 'Islamic' to refer to the inhabitants of Granada. The invaders of 711 were not purely Arab. The Moors nearly captured half of France before their defeat and retreat. Had they been successful, most of Europe might now be Arab, Muslim, or Moorish.

It's important to note that the concept of nation-states did not exist at the time. Kings and princes were primarily self-interested, forming alliances that suited their immediate needs. The Moorish invasion of Granada and their interaction with other inhabitants and religions has had a lasting effect on modern-day culture, politics, and society in Spain.

Before the birth of Christ, the region was occupied by the Celts, Phoenicians, and Romans. After the fall of the Roman Empire, it was the Christians who took over. The Romans, interestingly, didn't value the region much, but they were there nonetheless.

The so-called Dark Ages saw the arrival of the Vandals and the Goths in the 500s. They were Catholic and their oppression of the Jews and other races led many, particularly the Jews, to side with the Moors when they invaded. It's important to note that the Moors' takeover would have been impossible without the inside help of those who were restless under the previous regimes.

The Moors invaded because they saw it as a desirable territory and had conquered large parts of it by 714. The initial invasion was led by a man named Tariq in 711, sent by the Caliph of Damascus to recover estates taken by King Roderic, the Visigoth King who ruled from Toledo.

On a trip to Madrid in the 1990s, my wife Helen, our daughter, and I had a choice of what to do. Helen and our daughter visited Toledo, a major centre of civilisation while I, intrigued by the Spanish Armada, visited the Royal Palace.

Tariq was soon joined by Musa, whose son married King Roderic's widow. Here we see a Moor marrying a Christian, not an unusual occurrence, but he was betrayed by a new Caliph.

The reasons behind the Moorish invasion are a subject of great controversy. Some argue it was a holy war or jihad, driven by the Koran's promise of the remission of sins and the promise of paradise for those who die for Islam. However, successive Popes promised the Crusaders remission for their sins for fighting in Spain or the Holy Land, showing that religious intolerance cut both ways.

Others argue the Moors were tolerant and brought culture to Andalusian Spain. I believe there was a social contract, but it was often broken. When it was broken, the Moors were more vulnerable because their control depended on the willing desire of people in the country to accept them.

Some writers argue that the driving force of the Moorish invasion was material advancement. Such disagreements and interpretations have led to profound divisions in modern Spain as it grapples with its past and forges a national identity.

Spain today faces numerous issues, with the Basques wanting to be separatists and people in Valencia and Barcelona often talking about secession from Spain. They struggle with defining what it means to be Spanish.

From 711 to 1492, the Moors ruled. Despite there being only 7,000 to 10,000 Moorish invaders from Africa and Arabia, with widely different ethnic, tribal, and religious backgrounds, they took control of the area with the agreement of the total population.

I can't provide an exact figure for the population back then, but I can confidently say that the newcomers were significantly outnumbered by the existing residents. As a minority aiming to govern the majority, they had to gain acceptance. This is a broad stroke, but the arbitrary rule of the Visigoths was essentially replaced by a just and fair system.

The principles of Islam bolstered the inherent egalitarianism of Arab and Berber societies. It's plausible that their success stemmed from their ability to promote individuals based on merit. There was a greater degree of equality for the times, including a more equitable distribution of land and other benefits, which eliminated reasons for conflict.

Essentially, if people's material needs were met, they were likely to be content. I prefer the term 'content' over 'complacent'. I believe this led to social integration, facilitated by a sort of contract.

The initial treaty allowed the Visigoth governor of the region to maintain considerable autonomy as a local commander. He supplied the conquerors with money, produce, and slaves, and was left to manage his territory. He wasn't replaced by another elite figure.

Those who traditionally paid royalties were largely left in their positions, as long as they continued to pay their dues. It was quite feudal in that sense. If they provided the goods, they were likely to gain acceptance.

Jews and Christians could practice their religion, subject to land and poll taxes. Converts to Islam were welcomed, and slaves who converted could gain their freedom. If you wished to remain a minority, you could choose to be a Christian or a Jew.

You might have to pay for the privilege, but with some exceptions, you could practice your religion. It's clear that if you weren't deeply religious and converting to Islam, or if you were a slave and converting to Islam would improve your material circumstances, you were likely to convert. There were numerous conversions.

My father, who lived in the Middle East, would refer to this phenomenon as 'rice for Christianity'.

Many of the early immigrants were given land for service, but there wasn't enough land for all the newcomers. To avoid alienating the local population, they were paid a stipend as professional soldiers.

So, if I were to invade, I would expect to be given a piece of land. But if I were given a piece of land, the original owner would resent me. If I could be appeased with other roles, such as being appointed to the standing army, I would be rewarded accordingly.

Not everyone who crossed over would have made good farmers anyway. Many were quite content to serve in the standing army and receive payment.

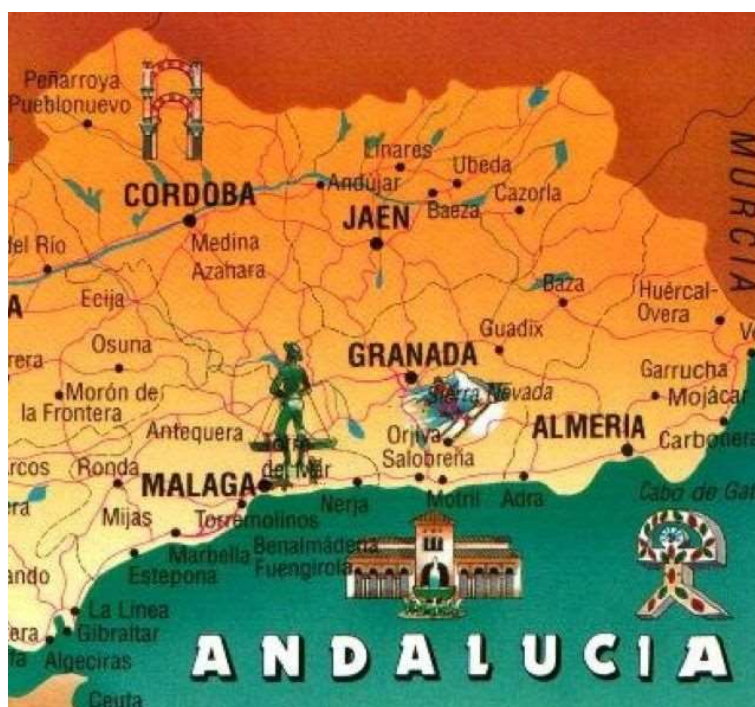
Intermarriage was encouraged, and by the 10th century, most families in this part of Spain had mixed heritage. There were few people who were purely European or purely Moorish.

Those who paid the capitation tax were allowed to be judged by their own laws and had their own churches, and they selected their own archbishops and bishops. So, in religious matters, the clergy still held authority.

Jews enjoyed the same level of tolerance, and many who had fled from Visigoth rule settled in Toledo, Cordoba, Malaga, and Granada. Some advisors to the Moorish people were of Jewish descent and, between the 10th and 12th centuries, they made significant contributions to the culture and government of both Muslim and Christian Spain.

Cordoba emerged as a vibrant centre where cultures converged, ideas flourished, and governance thrived. Slaves from diverse backgrounds—ranging from Sudanese Negroes to East Europeans—found their freedom in Cordoba. Captured in wars or sold by Viking raiders during their childhood, these individuals converted to Islam upon emancipation.

By the 10th century, Cordoba boasted a staggering 8,000 freed slaves. They contributed to the bureaucracy, services, and even the standing army.



Map of Andalusia

Strategic considerations transformed frontier garrisons into sophisticated urban centres. Public baths, palaces, schools, mosques, bustling markets, elegant fountains, and lush gardens adorned the cityscape. Cordoba, until 1031, served as the capital of an area comprising Emirates under royal rule and Caliphates under religious authority.

In 785, Abdu'l-Rahman laid the foundation of the Great Mosque of Cordoba. A colossal undertaking, it required ten thousand labourers, 1,800 camels, and countless hours of toil over 25 years. The cost—300,000 dinars—equivalent to approximately 30 million New Zealand dollars today, underscores its grandeur.

The Great Mosque was more than a place of worship; it housed a library boasting 400,000 books—a beacon of knowledge in a world hungry for learning.

Beyond the city walls, Cordoba's countryside thrived. New plants and trees were introduced, transforming the landscape. Soil studies and irrigation systems facilitated cultivation. Grapes, rice, saffron, cotton, citrus fruits, melons, figs, apples, pomegranates, and other crops flourished. The surplus sustained a rapidly growing population.

As I delve into the rich history of Spain, I am struck by the major linguistic contributions that have shaped modern Spain, such as the term “noria” which means water wheel.

The relatively stable world of Moorish settlement was not, however, without its struggles.

Over centuries, internal fighting led to the fragmentation of Andalusia into small separate states or Taifas, each centered on the main cities under the strongest nobility and military commanders. Despite these struggles, most of these states survived for two centuries, and the Hispano-Muslim civilization reached a new peak by the 11th and 12th century.

The Moors were not defeated in Granada until 1492. They found themselves both unwilling and unable to face the increasing pressure from the mainly Christian north.

The Alhambra, a construction project of successive rulers of the Nasrid Dynasty, stands as a testament to this era. This 8th-century site, named Qal'at al-Hamra (meaning red fort) for the reddish walls and towers that surrounded the citadel, is a symbol of the Moorish legacy.

What fascinated me about the Nasrids was their meritocratic system. Advancement was not determined by heredity, but by ability. This was a society where you could rise through the ranks based on your own achievements.

As the eventual defeat of the Moors seemed imminent, a local chief named Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr ibn al-Ahmar proclaimed himself the ruler of a small territory that included Baeza to the east, Guadix to the south, and the city of Jaen. In 1237, he made Granada his capital and founded the Nasrid dynasty that ruled Grenada for 200 years.

His story is one of remarkable transformation - from a farm labourer, to a chivalrous and brilliant general to a sultan. His journey shows that progression from farm labourer to general to ruler was possible. He settled into the castle, fortified the site against external threats, and constructed three new towers.

One of the significant achievements of this period was the canalisation of bringing the water down from the mountains. As I toured the region, I saw that water, a scarce and valued commodity, was a sign of wealth.

Mohammed ben Al-Hamar built halls for young soldiers and guards, and began the construction of the palaces. His descendants continued this work, creating the great mosque of The Alhambra and public baths. These public baths, once popular with the Romans, had fallen out of fashion during the Dark Ages. Europeans thought it was an unhealthy exercise, but they made a comeback during this time.

Most of the well-known structures will be shown in [the video at the end](#), so I won't talk a lot about them, but they are truly amazing.

Now, let's move on to pomegranates, the symbol of Granada and other regions. The romantic image of Granada is embodied in the pomegranate motifs. Street signs, fountains, paving stones, manhole covers, and the fountain of the Charles V palace in The Alhambra all bear this symbol.

The pomegranate is an ancient fruit whose name comes from the Latin pomum, which means apple, and granatum, which means seeded. It has a huge multicultural history. The fruit origins of the pomegranate were in Iran and India about 5,000 years ago. They were buried with the dead to take to the afterlife.

In Greek mythology, Persephone was condemned to live with Hades, the King of the underworld, after eating six seeds of a pomegranate. So she had to spend six months in Hades or hell, the underground, and six months in the world. When she is back, it is summer. There is new life and a harvest, and when it is winter, she is back in the underworld.

The pomegranate is part of the Jewish tradition as well. The Temple of Solomon was adorned by 200 pomegranates. Some Jewish scholars believe they are the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden. Most of the modern state of Israel has the symbol on coins and it's the symbol of the Jewish New Year.

Some Arab cultures believe eating the pomegranate cleanses the heart and fills it with light, keeping the sinner free from sin and temptation for 40 days. It was regarded as having healing qualities by St. John of God, who was active during the year 1538 and it's a visual representation of Christ shedding blood during his crucifixion. So Christians, Jews, and Muslims all have reasons to honour the pomegranate.

There was an ancient manuscript dating back to Nasrid times found recently in a desk which contained a recipe called the dish of three religions. It contained grains, grapes, and pomegranates.

The end of the Islamic rule resulted from internal feuding. Plots against one another occurred for over 150 years. They formed different clans and turned against each other. Many murders took place that made Julius Caesar look like a saint. They were weakened and didn't have any sort of unified support for the crown.

The Spanish Christians were just as divided. There was no such thing as a Spanish kingdom, but what happened was that in 1492, King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile conquered Granada, unified Spain under a Catholic monarchy, and ended years of the Islamic wars.

There is a very famous painting. The last ruler, Abu Abdullah Muhammad XII, also known as Boabdil, is leaving to go into exile and he's looking back over the territory where his ancestors had come to six centuries before.



After turning over the keys of Granada to Ferdinand, Boabdil took a last glance at the city before riding into exile

Boabdil had arranged as part of surrendering The Alhambra that they would still recognise the Jewish, Muslim religion. Within a year, the Jews had been expelled and what followed was the Spanish Inquisition.

COFFEE MORNING AT MITRE 10

UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTERS AND THE TRUSTS' STRATEGY

Vince Middeldorp (Copilot AI)

At our recent gathering at Columbus Coffee in Mitre 10 on Lincoln Road, we arranged three tables to accommodate everyone who attended, fostering an inclusive conversation. Upon my arrival, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Alan Babich had made an appearance. He not only paid his subscription for the current year, but also for the next. Alan's presence was unexpected, as he hadn't attended our monthly meetings at the Friendship Hall for quite some time.

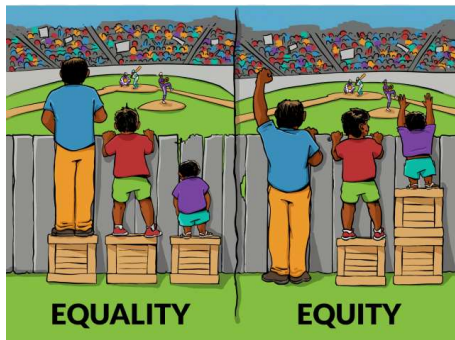


Alan Babich at the 2020 Christmas Lunch

Those present during Alan's visit remarked on his good health and relayed his overseas travel plans to Croatia with family members accompanying him, presumably to assist him if needed.

Our struggle with membership numbers is no secret. Last year, we had 24 paid subscriptions. However, with Rex Billington continuing to pay his subscription and Alan Babich returning, our count has increased to 29 paid subscriptions. Hopefully, it will be in the thirties by the end of the year.

As a result of my quest to secure a grant for bus trips, I criticised The Trusts' Community Funding Strategy at the coffee morning. Their new strategy aims to "Enable everyone to get to the starting line for a good life," and it focuses on initiatives that support or are led by community groups, "who are furthest away from the starting line because of the barriers they experience."



The 2023-2028 funding strategy for The Trusts has increasing equity as its priority

Because most of us are nearing the finishing line in our journey, I expressed my concern that The Trusts' funding will benefit troubled youths from challenging backgrounds in Ranui, and overlook our group. I noticed my candid opinion drew the attention of the café staff. Perhaps, in the future, I need to speak less loudly when expressing my views.

OUTINGS AND TRIPS

EXPLORE WARKWORTH MUSEUM

Vince Middeldorp (Copilot AI)



Warkworth New Zealand is where the bus is going on 22nd May

Join us on the bus trip to the Warkworth Museum! Immerse yourself in local history, fascinating exhibits, and the charm of the Warkworth area. Here are the details:

- Date: Wednesday, 22nd of May
- Departure Time: 9:15 am from the St John Hall in Edmonton Road
- Return Time: Approximately 3:00 pm

During our visit, a knowledgeable representative from the museum will be on hand to share insights about its rich heritage. Discover artefacts, stories, and memories that span generations. From moments we lived through to glimpses of bygone eras, the exhibits promise to evoke nostalgia and curiosity.

Cost and Payment Options:

- \$20 per person
- Direct Credit: Transfer to bank account 12 3232 0318628 00
- Cash: Pay in person to Ian Smith at our meeting on the 10th of May

Our scenic route will take us via the new motorway to Warkworth, and on the return journey, we'll follow the old highway, making a stop at Orewa for coffee or lunch.

Why Visit? Having experienced the magic of Warkworth Museum during a previous trip with the New Lynn Men's Probus Club and the Glen Eden Combined Probus Club in September 2019, I can wholeheartedly recommend this outing.



Two of the first people from the bus into the museum are Laurie Vincent and Peter Cox (green jacket)

Mark your calendars, gather your friends, and let's make this trip to Warkworth Museum a cherished memory. See you on board!

LIONS CLUB OF HENDERSON-WEST AUCKLAND **NAVY BAND CONCERT**

Dorothy Reid from the Lions Club of Henderson-West Auckland has sent us details for the upcoming annual Senior Citizens Navy Band Concert, at the Te Atatu Peninsula Community Centre.



The Royal New Zealand Navy Band playing at the Te Atatu Community Centre

Those who have been to these concerts in the past will know that the Royal New Zealand Navy Band fills the air with lively melodies that are sure to set your toes tapping.

Hopefully, the Navy Band will again put forward their jazz quartet. It provides an added layer of sophistication and flair to the performance.

Admission is free, and complimentary afternoon tea will be provided.

Date: Wednesday, 12th June 2024 **Time:** 1:30 PM **Venue:** Te Atatu Peninsula Community Centre.

NEXT COFFEE MORNING



Gloria Jeans formerly known as Esquires

Coffee Morning at Gloria Jeans: Our next coffee morning will be held at Gloria Jeans Coffee at The Boundary shopping centre in Henderson. The coffee morning is on Wednesday, 29th May. As usual, we'll start at 10 am.

NEW HOP READERS FOR FUTURE PAYMENT OPTIONS

John Mihaljevic



Auckland Transport have started rolling out new HOP card readers around the network and over the next three months, all of them on buses, at train stations and ferry wharves will be replaced.

Later this year, if you're paying a standard adult (HOP) fare, you will be able to pay for AT buses, trains and ferries with Apple and Google Pay, debit cards and most credit cards in addition to your current AT HOP card.

SUPPORTERS



The June meeting date is Friday 14th June 2024

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