



West Auckland Men's Rebus Club Newsletter

January 2025

Next meeting: 10:00 am Friday 10th January, Friendship Hall, 3063 Great North Rd, 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 |
| Welfare Officer | Bill Mutch | celebrantwedding@gmail.com | 021316556 |
| Photographer | John Mihaljevic | john@rebuswestauckland.nz | 098361504 |



Inviting members to bring-a-plate led to a plentiful spread at our final meeting for 2024

MEETING REPORT

December 2024

Chairman: Bill Mutch

Attendance: 21 members and 1 visitor

Members: Neil Castle, John Corban, Stephen David, Vince Dennehy, Mensto De Roos, Bill Fairs, Maurice Forbes, Robert King, John McKeown, Vince Middeldorp, John Mihaljevic, Eddy Molloy, Bill Mutch, Andrew Narayan, Charles Nicholls, Lyndsay Parris, Trevor Pollard, Alan Verry, Ken Webster, Allan Williamson, Garrick Yearsley. Visitors: John (surname not known).

1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from Noel Rose, Ian Smith, and Raymond Barrett.



Alan Verry (standing) in conversation with Bill Mutch during the December morning tea

2. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting (November):

No matters arising were identified from the November meeting.

3. Correspondence:

Rebus New Zealand has updated its travel insurance recommendations. Instead of a single preferred insurer, multiple options are now provided. The best travel insurance to buy depends on health status and the excess charges that result from them.

4. Treasurer's Report:

- Membership for the year totalled 30 members (29 financial and 1 life member). Donations received amounted to \$478, including some donated fees from club speakers.
- A total of \$237 has been raised from morning teas, with more expected.
- The club is forecasted to make a profit of approximately \$240 to \$300 this year. This amount will help keep the membership fee stable. A suggestion was made to place any travel grant funds in an interest-bearing account next year.
- The chairperson proposed maintaining the membership fee at \$30 for the coming year. The motion was seconded by Alan Verry, and it passed unanimously.
- The club is in a stable financial position, with approximately \$1,000 expected to be in the bank at year's end.

5. Welfare Report:

- Tom Lowndes, former secretary for the club, is now in full-time care at Carnarvon Hospital. His condition is stable, and his regards were conveyed.
- Andrew Geddes is able to understand people but is unable to communicate verbally. He is making progress and can drink water on his own.

6. Guest Speakers:

- There are no known guest speakers scheduled for the next meeting.

7. General Business:

Trevor Pollard invited members to the 7th Anniversary of the Chapel in the Oaks event at Waikumete Committee Cemetery this Sunday at 7:00 PM.

Claudia's Corner

Why don't skeletons fight each other?

Because they don't have the guts!

What do you call fake spaghetti?

An impasta!

Why don't scientists trust atoms?

Because they make up everything!

Did you hear about the claustrophobic astronaut?

He needed a little space.

What do you call a belt made of watches?

A waist of time!

Enjoy the meeting.

Cheers Claudia.



PRESIDENT'S PRATTLE **President's Report January 2025** **Bill Mutch**

Happy New Year to All!

As we bid farewell to 2024, I'd like to extend my warmest wishes for a bright and prosperous 2025.

Christmas was particularly special for me this year. I had the pleasure of hosting 15 people at my home for Christmas lunch, all wonderfully prepared by my son David, who happens to be an award-winning chef. Needless to say, the meal was extraordinary!

On a more sombre note, David and I have lost contact with Trevor Pollard, which is unusual since we usually stay in regular touch. Trevor has been dealing with significant heart issues, and his house is currently closed up. We're keeping him in our thoughts—watch this space for updates.



Latest update: Trevor Pollard is facing some challenges as his landline is down, Fay's health has been concerning, and Trevor's heart condition is a worry. However, we're relieved to know he's made it to 2025.

Meanwhile, Claudia is overseas, enjoying a skiing trip in South Korea. She's due back on Friday, January 3. South Korea has been in the news recently because of a tragic air crash claiming 179 lives, along with political issues involving their President.

At our December meeting, Vince delivered a wonderful and engaging presentation. The "bring a plate" idea worked brilliantly, and it was a great way to share and connect.

I look forward to seeing you all at our next meeting.

Cheers,
Bill

RACING DREAMS: A JOURNEY WITH CAPTAIN COURT

GUEST SPEAKER VINCE MIDDELDORP

Whisper AI & Copilot AI



Vince Middeldorp waits before beginning his talk on horse racing

I'll start this talk with a photo taken in June 2023. It features a horse named Desert Hero, sporting a cross-nose band. This photograph epitomizes the enduring legacy of horse racing as the sport of kings, highlighting King Charles III alongside renowned trainer William Haggis and jockey Tom Marquand. While Haggis has successfully traversed halfway around the world for the Sydney Autumn Carnival, my own attempts in 1994 were less fruitful.

Although I never met the individuals in that photo, I once encountered Andrew Parker Bowles, Camilla's former husband, who astounded me with his extensive knowledge of New Zealand. I marvelled at how he knew more places here than I did. It turned out he had served as an aide-de-camp to Sir Bernard Fergusson, touring the country with the then Governor-General as part of his entourage.

In 1987, I owned a mare stabled next to the Albany Pony Club, and cared for by a retired farmer named Jack Sample. Determined to breed her, I embarked on a journey to Taranaki with my dad and Jack. We loaded the mare into a horse float and drove all the way there without stopping. I vividly recall the exhaustion setting in as my dad and Jack slept, while I nervously thought, "If I nod off, we're all dead."

The following year, a call from Julie Duff at Flat Bush Farm in Papatoetoe brought the news that my mare had foaled. Dad and I rushed to see the beautiful chestnut colt with two white feet and a distinct snip on his nose, a stark contrast to his bay mare mother.



My mare's chestnut foal at Julie Duff's Flat Bush Farm

Training this young horse became my new mission. By then, I had learned the art of horse training from Barney Meyer and attended seminars by Neil Davies on breaking in horses. Jack Sample taught me how to shoe horses, Clyde Tracey taught me to ride, and Phil Robinson, the vet, taught me to rasp their teeth. With the name Captain Court registered, I was ready to take him to the racetrack.

Before he could race, I had to run Captain Court in a barrier trial. At Ellerslie, I searched the jockey's room for an experienced rider. Senior jockey Jim Collett declining to accept the ride him, resulted in me asking Joanne Pocock. She became Captain Court's regular rider and won six races on him.

When Captain Court was five, he faced a formidable competitor, Blue Train, at Ellerslie. Despite my own doubts, Captain Court triumphed, followed by Blue Train and Whitford Hill. Soon after, a man offered me \$240,000 for my horse, which I declined. The ensuing media attention described Captain Court as, "An amateur trained stayer on the verge of stardom."

Captain Court's pedigree included a notable name in Sir Tristram. His sire, Courthouse, was unraced, while his mother, Brunhild, was the winner of one race. Interestingly, Captain Court's lineage had a connection to the legendary racehorse Phar Lap, through Ann Raymond, the daughter of St. Albans Stud owner Guy Raymond. She was the breeder of Captain Court's mother.

Phar Lap, the favourite for the 1930 Melbourne Cup, survived an assassination attempt which led to his secretive refuge at St. Albans Stud. Despite the turmoil, including a stormy night and a hasty last-minute dash to the race, Phar Lap triumphed in the Melbourne Cup, extending his remarkable winning streak to fifteen consecutive races.

In January 1994, after Captain Court's Avondale victory in the York Cup, I was approached by the Secretary from Gosford Racing Club, suggesting my horse might excel on their track because of its short straight. The notion of racing in Australia was exciting.

After getting Captain Court's papers endorsed by the Racing Conference, I prepared for our adventure to Australia. One of my first steps was to seek advice from trainer Vic Booth in Cambridge. Vic had taken a horse, another son of Courthouse, to Australia the previous year. He shared a crucial tip: upon landing, I should find the best local horse vet and establish a good relationship. This turned out to be sage advice.

We flew to Australia on a Qantas Boeing 747 Combi plane, which was ideal because it operated on a reliable schedule. Later, these planes were converted to full passenger aircraft. As soon as the seat belt sign turned off after departure, I rushed to the freight compartment to check on Captain Court, who was calmly standing with three other horses.

Upon arrival, we headed to Kingston Lodge at Kembla Grange in Wollongong, owned by Sydney tire re-treader Angelo Vassali. The stables in Kembla Grange were typically owned by affluent individuals and rented to trainers. Angelo, who was selling Kingston Lodge, generously offered it to me without charge for the duration of my stay, as the settlement date was far enough away that I would be gone before it arrived.

During our time there, I met Susan Hicks, whose husband Graeme had been a top trainer in South Australia before a virus devastated his stable. We were conveniently located next to the racecourse, making morning training sessions a breeze. The grandstand bore the name Keith F Nolan, a name unfamiliar to me. It turned out Keith Nolan, with connections in the Labour party, had secured government funding to rejuvenate Kembla Grange racecourse, including building a new grandstand and brick tie-up stalls.

Shortly after settling in, Dave Newling, the racing editor for the Illawarra Mercury, visited with a photographer to cover our story. His article highlighted my ambition to win the cups double: the Canterbury Cup and the Manion Cup.

William Haggis, the UK trainer, has pursued the same goal in recent years, winning the Manion Cup three times with different horses from Ireland, Germany, and France. My challenge was to win the Manion Cup in 1994.

One significant obstacle was Captain Court's living conditions. Accustomed to a horse paradise at home, he now had to adapt to a confined yard in Australia. This drastic change worried me, as horses need to be happy to perform well.

The best trainer at Kembla Grange was Gwenda Markwell. She rented stables owned by Wealthy Baxter. He had made his money when he sold a Sydney radio station. Wealthy warned me against racing in Sydney, claiming the jockeys were dishonest.

Our first race in Australia was the Canterbury Cup at Canterbury Park. Captain Court's record of six wins in 17 races stood out among the ten entries. We finished third, beaten by just a neck, which was a commendable performance. One trainer later remarked that we could have won with a different jockey, but I had no regrets staying with Joanne Pocock.

Before leaving for Australia, Andy Miller, who owned a BP petrol station in Point Chevalier, had cautioned me about Australian trainers trying to steal my horse. Gai Waterhouse, a prominent Sydney trainer, indeed made a tempting offer which was to train Captain Court for free if she couldn't win with him. If he won races, I would pay her training fees from the winnings. I remembered what I had said to Andy and did not take up her offer.

In the Manion Cup, we had no luck. Captain Court finished 11th, and it all went wrong due to roadworks on the way to the racecourse. The truck carrying Captain Court to the races was caught in a traffic jam, and by the time we arrived, Captain Court was drenched in sweat—a state we called a muck lather. Tony Noonan, the trainer of one of the other runners in the race, told me he knew we had no chance of winning when he

saw Captain Court coming off the truck. Horses are fine as long as the vehicle is moving, but when it stops, some panic and sweat profusely, which was Captain Court's undoing in the Manion Cup.

Back at Kembla Grange, I decided to aim for an easier race. I gave Captain Court a training gallop, and he ran terribly. I called my dad in Auckland to say I was coming home. However, Graeme Hicks, Susan's husband, insisted I not give up and told me to get Mel Schumacher to gallop Captain Court.

Mel Schumacher agreed to help. After galloping Captain Court, Mel reassured me there was nothing wrong with him and said he could even win his upcoming race.

Mel Schumacher was an exceptional jockey, having been the champion apprentice in both Sydney and Brisbane in 1958, and he even won the Melbourne Cup that year. He was, however, infamously known as the leg-pulling jockey. In the 1961 Australian Derby, he grabbed the leg of a rival jockey during the race. This led to a significant suspension, and Mel spent years working in the markets in Queensland. Eventually, he returned to racing, amassing over 2,000 wins.

Looking for a jockey, I received a call from Wi Mason, manager for Brian York, an ex-New Zealand rider who was having good success in Sydney. I was told Brian had watched all of Captain Court's races and didn't need any instructions on how to ride him.

We raced at Royal Randwick, the most prestigious racecourse in Sydney, and finished third, earning \$3,800 in prize money. Although Captain Court lost by a neck and three-quarters of a length, it was still a competitive performance. In Australian racing, New Zealanders are welcome, but they prefer to see us lose. Most races are handicaps, with the best horse carrying the most weight. Captain Court carried 58.5 kilos, and the winning horse, Potential Star, carried 56 kilos. The weight disadvantage was the difference between winning and running third.

While in Australia, I frequented Leagues clubs for meals. The Dapto Leagues Club, Berkley Sports and Social Club, and Wests of Illawarra were some of my favourites. With affordable membership fees and cheap meals made possible by poker machine revenue, these clubs were quite popular.

Captain Court would have spent all of his time cooped up in the yards at Kingston Lodge, were it not for a fellow trainer, ex-New Zealander Chris Mol. He owned a truck and invited me to join him for beach trips. Every day, I took Captain Court to Windang Beach, where I would sit on him and walk him around on the sand. These beach outings provided a welcome respite from the confines of the yards and helped keep Captain Court happy and relaxed.

The last race was the Gosford Cup, at the provincial Gosford Racecourse, which is one hour north of Sydney. Gosford's surrounding bush-clad hills reminded me of our own Waitakere Ranges. Unfortunately, Captain Court didn't perform well and finished tenth out of thirteen. The winner was Thrifty Reserve, who had finished a neck ahead of us in the Canterbury Cup. I thought it just wasn't our day.

However, after the race, Gai Waterhouse approached me to apologize. She confessed to instructing Gavin Eades to ensure Captain Court didn't have an easy run. She believed Eades had ruined Captain Court's chances and that of her own runner, Red For Go.

Following the race, Captain Court began limping, and Gai Waterhouse advised me to get him back to Wollongong quickly. We hurried back to Kingston Lodge, where the vet diagnosed a hairline fracture in his cannon bone. The vet presented two options: insert a compression screw or allow it to heal naturally, a decision to be made back in New Zealand.

Before leaving, Angelo Vassali, the owner of Kingston Lodge, revealed that jockey Kevin Moses had been placing bets on Protaras Bay in the Gosford Cup. Protaras Bay was one of two runners in the Gosford Cup from the Waterhouse stable. Kevin Moses knew not to bet on the Waterhouse runner Red For Go which was the one Gavin Eades was riding. It sowed a doubt in my mind about the integrity of the races.

We returned to New Zealand on a DHL plane, a journey marked by the curious experience of standing up and holding onto a crate during take-off. Once home, a vet in Takanini inserted a compression screw into Captain Court's leg, and he recovered to win his best-ever race, the New Zealand Stakes. This prestigious weight-for-age race, now boasting a \$1 million stake, has its own page in Wikipedia.

Reflecting on the race's history, Captain Court won it in 1995, and Whitford Hill placed second in 1993. That placing was the reason for Whitford Hill being the top weight when we had raced against her and Blue Train at Ellerslie.



Captain Court winner of the New Zealand Stakes (Group 1) at Ellerslie

Captain Court's career concluded with ten wins and \$140,000 in earnings. Though some might argue I should have sold him for \$240,000, I have no regrets. The journey and experiences were priceless.

A year after leaving Sydney, the 1995 Jockeys Tape Scandal unfolded, involving drug dealer Victor Spink and jockeys Jim Cassidy, Kevin Moses, and Gavin Eades. Spink's drug smuggling escapades resulted in police surveillance, revealing his illicit betting connections. Cassidy was banned for three years and Moses for 12 months. Eades vanished into obscurity until a 2009 altercation with underworld figure Tuppence Moran, who was shot dead three months later.

To conclude, I want to share the race from England in 2023 that was won by King Charles' horse, Desert Hero. For most of the run down the straight Desert Hero, is hemmed in between two horses. Jockey Tom Marquand then skilfully manoeuvres towards the fence, finds a gap and gets up to win in the last few strides. The race shows racing's allure lies in its unpredictability and rapid shifts, making it a sport like no other.

COFFEE MORNING AT GLORIA JEAN'S CAFÉ

WEDNESDAY, 18TH DECEMBER

Vince Middeldorp & Copilot AI

With Christmas just around the corner, it was no surprise that the turnout for the final coffee morning of the year was modest compared to other gatherings at Gloria Jean's Café. However, it was a pleasant morning, nonetheless.

Once again, Ian Smith brought together members from West Auckland Men's Rebus and Waitakere Combined Rebus, fostering camaraderie between the groups.

During the morning, I learned more about the St John Hall, the meeting venue for Waitakere Combined Rebus. Interestingly, their use of the hall is subject to its availability. This arrangement means Waitakere Combined has to cancel meetings—around two a year—when the hall is unavailable.

Under the veranda of the Hall, there is a sign that reads, "St John Education Centre." St John obviously uses the Hall for training courses such as their First Aid and Resuscitation courses, and their use of the hall would limit its availability for groups such as Waitakere Rebus.

Interestingly, Te Atatu Ladies Probus also holds their meetings at the St John Hall and would face the same occasional non-availability issue.

Next to the St John Hall is the Te Atatu South Community Centre, operated by the Auckland City Council. The hire rate for the main hall is \$51 per hour, which would make it unattractive for Waitakere Rebus, who make an annual donation for their use of the St John Hall.



The Te Atatu South Community Hall and the St John Hall at Lloyd Morgan Park in Edmonton Road

NEXT COFFEE MORNING

We had a popular coffee morning in October 2024 at The Alderman, where we reconnected with Alan Babich and Rodger Hallam after a long time. We return there on **Wednesday January 22nd** for the first coffee morning of 2025. The start time is the same as always 10:00 am.

Unfortunately, a few members ended up paying for parking in the Alderman Drive – Edmonton Road car park in October due to all the free two-hour parking along The Alderman’s boundary being fully occupied.

If that happens again, use the free parking at the West Wave Pool Centre which is just a short walk from The Alderman.



There is ample free parking at the West Wave Pool Centre, which is just a short walk from The Alderman.



Walk over the artistic footbridge to get from West Wave to Fall’s Park and The Alderman

SPEAKERS FOR JANUARY MEETING

For the third year running, we start with three club speakers for the January meeting. Current President Bill Mutch, Ken Webster, who was President in 2009-10, and Garrick Yearsley have agreed to speak.

Bill Mutch will give a talk on the Queen Street riot of 1984, which began when an end-of-school-year rock concert in Aotea Square turned into a youth riot that caused over \$1 million worth of damage.

Ken Webster will talk about the events that led to him becoming an apprentice pharmacist, back in the day when there was such a thing, at the Frankton Junction Pharmacy.

Garrick Yearsley was a surveyor for Waitakere City Council during the subdivision of Council-owned land along Central Park Drive for businesses such as Douglas Pharmaceuticals. He is compiling some anecdotes about his career, including holiday jobs he worked on before joining the Council.



Raymond Barrett (thumbs up) sits next to Ken Webster, one of the three January speakers.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2025 (\$30.00)

Charles Nicholls will be collecting subscriptions and handing out receipts at the January meeting. If you prefer to pay online rather than with cash, the account number is 38-9022-0402722-00 and the account holders name is West Auckland Men's Rebus Club. The subscription for 2025 is \$30.00.

1 Payee details:

Account number: [Clear...](#)

Account owner:

info Enter the exact first and last name or business name that's been shared with you - no initials or nicknames. For joint accounts, we only need one person

Match
The name you've entered matches this number. Make sure you know and trust the payee. [Find out more](#)

SUPPORTERS



Our meetings are held at 10:00 am on the 2nd Friday of each month at New Lynn Friendship Hall, located at 3063 Great North Road. The date for our February meeting is Friday, 14th February.