



West Auckland Men's Rebus Club Newsletter

March 2025

Next meeting: 10:00 am Friday 14th March, Friendship Hall, 3063 Great North Road, New Lynn

COMMITTEE

President	Bill Mutch	president@rebuswestauckland.nz	817 4721
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Speakers	Noel Rose	noelrose1976@gmail.com	828 1305
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Photographer	John Mihaljevic	john@rebuswestauckland.nz	098361504



Trevor Pollard steps carefully off The Riverhead Cruiser while on the top deck the barbecue is being fired up

MEETING REPORT

February 2025

Chairman: Bill Mutch

Attendance: 23 members and 1 visitor (Justin Griffith)

Members: Raymond Barrett, Neil Castle, John Corban, Mensto De Roos, Bill Fairs, Maurice Forbes, Robert King, John McKeown, Vince Middeldorp, John Mihaljevic, Bill Mutch, Andrew Narayan, Charles Nicholls, Lyndsay Parris, Trevor Pollard, Paul Robertson, Noel Rose, Ian Smith, Alan Verry, Laurie Vincent, Ken Webster, Allan Williamson, Garrick Yearsley. Visitors: Justin Griffith.

1. Opening and Welcome:

Meeting commenced with a welcome from the chair and an acknowledgment of Valentine's Day.

Noted the presence of visitor Justin Griffith and welcomed back Laurie Vincent.

2. Apologies:

Vince Dennehy is overseas. Edie Malloy has just been discharged from hospital after a pelvis injury. Stephen David absent; chair to follow up on Stephen's health status.



Trevor Pollard and his crew cleaning up in the kitchen after the February morning tea

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting (January 2025):

No specific matters were recalled or raised.

4. Correspondence:

Email from Noel Townsley regarding the Riverhead Red Boats trip. Linda Narayan (Andrew's wife) added to the waiting list due to recent hip replacement. The Red Boats trip is nearly full (40 people booked). Additional transportation options considered, including larger bus or carpooling.

5. Treasurer's Report:

- Financial position stable due to incoming membership fees.
- Current balance: \$2,000 across accounts.
- Need for 30+ members to maintain financial stability; currently 14 members have paid for 2025.
- Capitation fees have increased from \$2.75 to \$3.75 per member.
- Motion to pay capitation fees moved and seconded; unanimously approved

6. Upcoming Trips and Events:

- Miranda Birds Trip (April 2nd): Cost \$20 per person, includes entry fee.
- Coffee Morning (February 26th) at Gloria Jean's, 10 AM.
- City Bus Tour (May): \$20 per person, includes visit to Pah Homestead.
- Invitation from Allan Verry to Farewell Event (February 23rd) for cruise ship Queen Anne; confirmed time 6-9 PM.

7. General Business:

- Discussion on hearing aids and insurance coverage. Information shared about custom hearing aid fittings (moulded fitting) at no extra cost.
- Treasurer Charles Nicholls offered his private house in Taranaki for use by members.

8. Special Announcements:

- Garth Dutton (Rebus NZ President) will attend the 40th anniversary of the club next month.
- Proposal to invite past members to celebrate the anniversary.

Claudia's Corner

A blonde lady was driving on the motorway when she got pulled over by a blonde female cop, who said, "You were going a bit fast. Can I see your license, please?"

"Oh, Officer, I think it's in my handbag," she replied, and started tipping the contents out. Then she asked the cop, "What does it look like?"

The cop said, "It's got a picture of you."

With that, the lady picks up a mirror and says, "Look here; it is my picture..."

The blonde cop looks at the mirror and says, "Let me see. You didn't tell me you were a uniformed cop. Get on your way."

What do you call a deer with no eyes?

No idea.

Doctor, I keep thinking I am a dog

The Doctor replies, "How long has this been going on?"

Oh, ever since I was a puppy

What do you get if you cross a Kangaroo with an elephant?

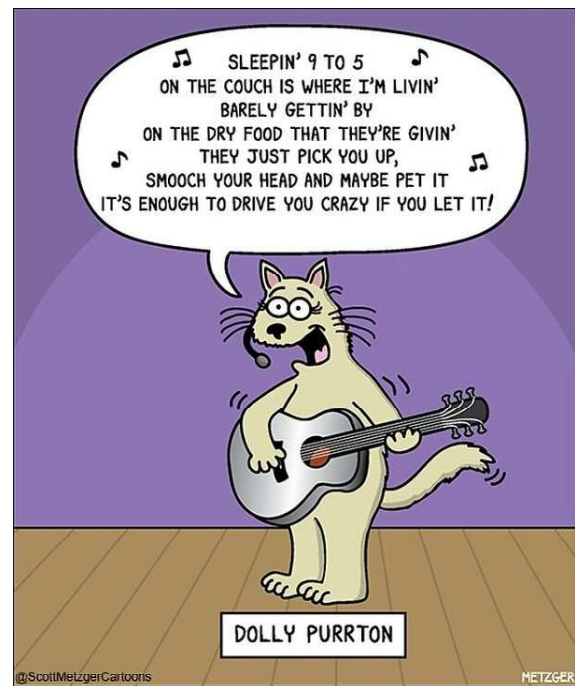
Very big holes all over Australia!

What do you call a fish with no eyes?

Fsh.

Hope this gives you a reason to smile.

Cheers Claudia.



PRESIDENT'S PRATTLE **President's Report March 2025**

Bill Mutch & Deepseek AI

A warm welcome to everyone!

While summer officially ended on February 28th, the nights remain uncomfortably hot—so much so that even my two cats are struggling with the heat!

I'd like to share a handy shopping tip for your supermarket shopping. If you shop at New World on a Tuesday and use your Gold Card, you can save significantly. Not only do you get access to the usual specials, but you also receive an additional 5% off your total shop. For example, my cat biscuits usually cost \$28.99, but on special, they're \$19.85, and with the Gold Card discount, the savings are even greater. Remember, this offer is only valid on Tuesdays at our local New World stores in Green Bay, New Lynn, and Hobsonville.



Bill Mutch sits at the end of the row after morning tea, between Paul Robertson (standing) and Ken Webster

On the welfare front, a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported Trevor with morning teas during this difficult time. As many of you know, Trevor recently lost his wife, Fay, and it will take time for him to heal. Your kindness and support mean the world to him.

On a personal note, I had a bit of a scare two weeks ago when I was bitten by a nasty spider on my arms and legs. It left me bedridden for a while, but thankfully, the doctor prescribed some medication, and I've since bounced back. My Parkinson's continues to progress, but I remain positive—onward and upward!

It was wonderful to see Laurie at our last meeting—always a pleasure to catch up with familiar faces.

I look forward to seeing you all at our next meeting. Until then, take care and stay well.

Cheers,
Bill Mutch

CHASING THE GODWITS: A LIFE AMONG MIGRATORY MARVELS

GUEST SPEAKER ADRIAN RIEGEN

Whisper AI & ChatGPT AI

I've been fascinated by wading birds for as long as I can remember. It has only just been a hobby—some might call it an obsession—and has taken me across the world, from the tundras of Alaska to the estuaries of New Zealand. Despite spending my career as a builder, my heart has always been with birds, particularly the bar-tailed godwit, a creature whose migratory feats defy belief.

The godwit's story is one of endurance and precision. These birds breed in the high latitudes of the globe, from Europe through Asia to Alaska. But come the northern winter, they embark on one of nature's most incredible migrations. Godwits from Alaska travel to New Zealand, flying non-stop for up to 13,000 kilometres—a record-breaking journey for any bird.

Their journey was once a mystery. In the 1880s, Walter Buller, a New Zealand ornithologist, speculated that they travelled through Asia and Australia before somehow crossing the Tasman Sea. It was a logical guess, given that godwits are land birds and not seabirds. However, modern tracking has revealed a different truth: these birds make an unbroken journey over the Pacific, pushing the limits of avian endurance.

Each year in March, the godwits prepare for their long-haul flight. The males don a striking red plumage to attract mates, while the females, darker and more camouflaged, focus on survival. Before they depart, they

must nearly double their weight, storing up enough fat to sustain them for the entire journey. Unlike other migratory birds that stop to refuel, godwits carry all their energy reserves from the start—like an air plane tanking up for a long-haul flight, with enough extra to account for unexpected detours.



Adrian Riegen is an ornithologist who studies the movements of migratory birds, including godwits

In some cases, birds even overeat. If they become too heavy before the migration window opens, they may take short “practice flights” of 1,000 kilometres or more, simply to burn excess fuel before embarking on the real journey.

For decades, our understanding of godwit migration was based on metal bands placed on their legs, each with a unique number. While helpful, these only provided data when a bird was found—often dead. To improve tracking, we started using coloured leg bands and engraved flags, allowing us to identify birds in the field.

The real breakthrough came with satellite tracking. In 2007, we fitted a godwit, known as E7, with a transmitter. She flew from New Zealand to China in one non-stop flight of 10,200 kilometres before continuing to Alaska. Then, in an even more astonishing feat, she returned to New Zealand in a single journey of 11,680 kilometres—setting a world record at the time.

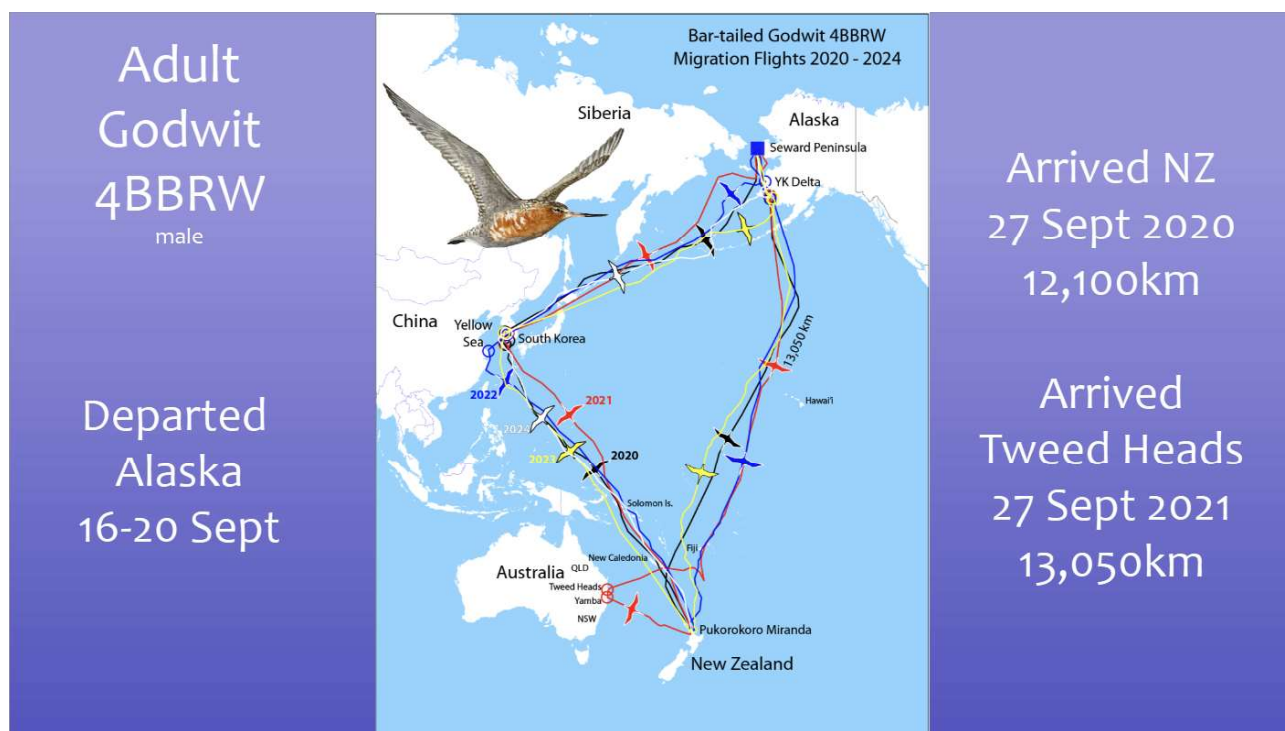
Since then, technology has improved. Modern solar-powered satellite tags weigh as little as two grams, allowing us to track more birds with greater accuracy. Some birds have now been recorded flying over 13,000 kilometres non-stop, proving that the godwit is the undisputed champion of long-distance migration.

Each godwit has a preferred departure date, often within the same small window every year. They seem to time their migration based on daylight cues, using the gradual loss of sunlight as a trigger. However, strong headwinds or cyclones can force them to reroute. One tracked bird was caught in a storm near New Caledonia, returned to New Zealand, rested for 14 days, and then successfully flew to China.

Once they reach the Yellow Sea, godwits rely on vast mudflats to refuel before continuing to Alaska. But these stopover sites are under threat. In China and South Korea, entire wetlands have been turned into industrial zones, drastically reducing available feeding grounds. In one case, a South Korean estuary that once supported 400,000 migratory birds was reduced to sustaining only 20,000 within two years of development. At least 70,000 great knots, a quarter of the world population, vanished with the destruction of that wetland.

From the Yellow Sea, the godwits continue north, but this part of their journey is far less direct. Some take the shortest route, while others make lengthy detours due to wind patterns. One bird, for example, was pushed so far off course by headwinds that it nearly ended up in California before finally correcting its path and making it to Alaska. These birds have an innate sense of direction, always finding their way to their remote breeding grounds, no matter the obstacles.

Godwits nest in the vast, remote tundra of Alaska, where their nests are hidden among mosses and grasses. They always lay four eggs, and both males and females take turns incubating. The chicks hatch into a world where summer is brief and conditions are harsh. Within just 12 weeks, they grow to full size, develop flight feathers, and prepare for their first migration to New Zealand—without any guidance from their parents, who leave ahead of them. How these young birds navigate a journey of 12,000 kilometres on their own remains one of nature’s greatest mysteries.



Flying non-stop godwit 4BBRW covered more than 12,000km in 9.3 days, touching speeds close to 100km/hr

By September, the godwits are ready to return south. They wait for favourable winds before departing Alaska, using strong tailwinds to propel them on their epic non-stop journey across the Pacific. One bird tracked in 2020 flew 12,100 kilometres in one stretch—the first recorded flight of over 12,000 kilometres. The following year, it broke its own record, flying at least 13,050 kilometres non-stop to New South Wales before correcting its course and heading to New Zealand. In total, a single godwit’s annual round trip can exceed 30,000 kilometres.

The oldest recorded godwit lived to be at least 28 years old, with several reaching 25. Most, however, do not survive beyond 10 years. Given their extraordinary migration distances, their resilience is astounding.

Even young birds, before making their first full migration, embark on “practice flights” around New Zealand. Some travel thousands of kilometres in seemingly random loops, testing their wings and building the endurance they will need for their future journeys.

Tracking technology has transformed our understanding of these incredible birds, but their future is uncertain. Climate change, habitat destruction, and human development continue to threaten their migratory routes.

For me, studying godwits has been the adventure of a lifetime. From the first metal bands to cutting-edge satellite tracking, each discovery has deepened my appreciation for these remarkable birds. Their story is still unfolding, and I feel privileged to play a part in revealing the secrets of one of nature’s greatest travellers.

THE RED BOATS TRIP TO RIVERHEAD

Vince Middeldorp & Deepseek AI



MV Hogwash (built in 1949) with a draught of 1 metre is ideal for the shallow waters of the upper Waitemata

The Red Boats trip to Riverhead was a delightful journey on a stunning early autumn day, offering a vivid reminder of how the Waitematā Harbour once served as Auckland’s primary highway, connecting communities long before roads were built.

Our vessel for the day was the charming MV Hogwash, though its side proudly bore the name The Riverhead Cruiser—a far more elegant title, in my opinion, for this marvellous little boat. Boarding at Westhaven Marina, I made a beeline for the top deck, confident it would offer the best views. I wasn’t disappointed. As one of my fellow travellers remarked, seeing Auckland’s diverse landscapes from the water was far more rewarding than a trip to Waiheke Island, where the views are mostly open sea.

As we cruised toward Riverhead, the port side revealed Point Chevalier, Te Atatū, Hobsonville, Herald Island, Whenuapai, and Huapai. To starboard, we passed the iconic Chelsea Sugar Refinery, Beach Haven, Kauri Point, Paremoremo, and Coatesville. The journey took a leisurely hour and a half, accompanied by an informative onboard commentary about the history of the areas we passed.

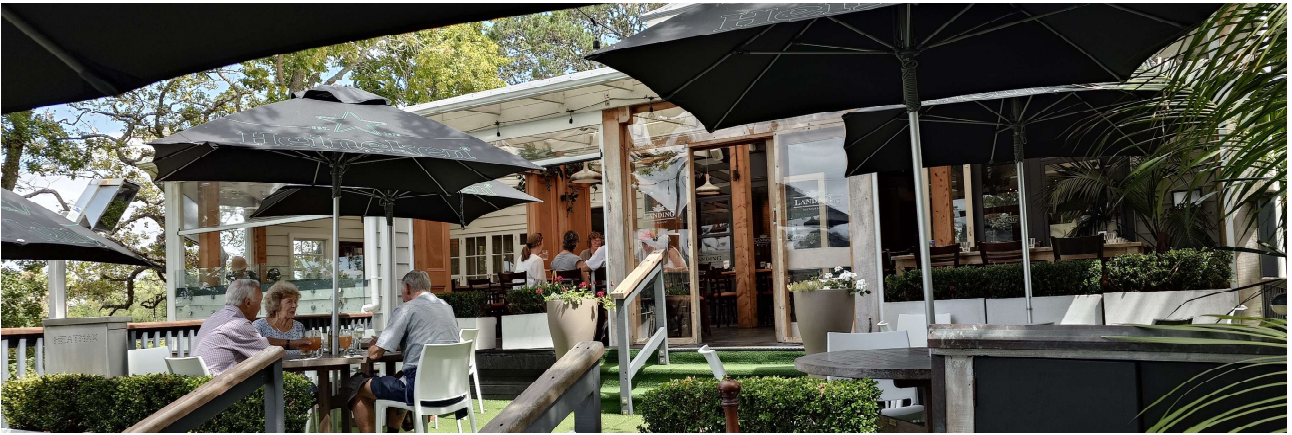


The Huapai Golf Course lies to the left of the Hare Krishna Temple, which can be seen in the distance

One fascinating tidbit stood out: Brigham’s Creek was once home to a paper mill. Intrigued, I later delved into its history. The Riverhead Paper Mill Company Limited was established in January 1899, with Auckland entrepreneurs refitting the old Waitematā flour mills for paper production. By April 1899, they had ordered a 54-inch MF Fourdrinier machine from J.S. Bertram & Son of Edinburgh, Scotland. The mill opened in early 1900 and later became part of New Zealand Paper Mills Ltd in 1905, following a merger with two other mills.

Upon arriving at Riverhead Pier, a crew member secured the boat, giving me time to explore. I climbed the steps, expecting to find an isolated rural road, but instead stumbled upon a restaurant. The name etched into its glass windows read The Landing Restaurant. Later research revealed that this eatery is part of the historic

Riverhead Tavern, established in 1857 by Thomas William Deacon. Remarkably, the tavern holds New Zealand's second-oldest liquor licence—a testament to its enduring legacy.



Ascend the steps from Riverhead Pier to discover the picturesque Landing Restaurant

The return cruise to Auckland was made even more enjoyable with a delicious barbecue lunch, courtesy of the Henderson Falls Friendship Club, who had organised the trip. Initially concerned about meeting the Red Boats' 30-person minimum, they were thrilled to see 44 people on board—30 from Henderson Falls, nine from West Auckland Men's Rebus, and five from Waitakere Combined Rebus.



Trevor Pollard was one of our members who joined the cruise to Riverhead (photo Ian Smith)

All in all, it was a day filled with discovery, camaraderie, and a deeper appreciation for Auckland's rich history and natural beauty.

A MEMORABLE MORNING AT GLORIA JEAN'S CAFÉ

Vince Middeldorp & Deepseek AI

There was a large turnout of members for the coffee morning at Gloria Jean's Café on Wednesday 26th of February. I arrived a little late and was lucky to find a spot squeezed against the back wall. Once members started leaving, I had the chance to move across and chat with Allan Williamson and John Mihaljevic.

During our conversation, I shared a story I had recently read about Mac Williams, the first president of the West Auckland Men's Rebus Club. Back in 1938, Mac was working at George Court's and found himself deeply unhappy in the job. His father and two uncles had been sailors on square-rigged ships, and perhaps inspired by their adventures, Mac decided to leave his job and head to sea.

The ship he boarded in Auckland was a steel-hulled, three-masted vessel known as a barque, powered entirely by sails. Mac's journey took him around the treacherous Cape of Good Hope, eventually landing him in London.

When I finished recounting this story, John Mihaljevic asked, "Was the ship the *Pamir*?" I thought he was correct and was nearly in disbelief—how could anyone possibly know the name of such an obscure ship? It wasn't until I reread the club's records that I discovered the ship was actually the *Penang*, not the *Pamir*. They were both sailing ships owned by Gustaf Erikson's shipping company, based in Mariehamn, Finland.

It was a fascinating moment, proving once again that you never know what surprises a good coffee morning conversation might bring!









Allan Williamson and John Mihaljevic at the coffee morning. To Allan's right are Justin and Ann Griffith.

BUS TRIP TO MIRANDA SHOREBIRD SANCTUARY

Vince Middeldorp & ChatGPT AI

We now have a confirmed cost for our trip to the **Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Sanctuary**—just **\$20 per person**, which includes the **\$5 entry fee**. Thanks to a **\$250 contribution from our TTCF grant**, we've been able to keep costs down.

Trip Details:

-  **Date:** Wednesday, 2nd April
-  **Departure:** 9:15 AM from St John Hall
-  **Travel Time:** Approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes
-  **Estimated Arrival:** Around 11:00 AM
-  **High Tide:** 11:04 AM
-  **Return:** By 3:00 PM




Timing is everything when it comes to birdwatching! In a 2020 **New Zealand Herald** article, journalist **Michelle Langstone** shared her disappointment at visiting the sanctuary when the tide was out—meaning few birds were visible. Luckily, we're not making that mistake!

At our February meeting, we asked **Adrian Riegen** whether there would still be plenty to see, given that the **Godwits begin their migration in March**. He assured us that many birds would still be present, making for an excellent day of birdwatching.

What to Expect

The **Shorebird Centre** is more than just a haven for bird lovers—it's a fantastic educational experience. While some of us will enjoy the displays at the centre, others may choose to explore the **coastal walking tracks**, where bird hides offer great vantage points. Expect to see a variety of shorebirds, including the **endemic Wrybill** and the famous **Bar-tailed Godwits**.

What to Bring

-  **Binoculars** – for the best views of the birds
-  **Packed lunch** – enjoy a meal while watching the Godwits
-  **Comfortable walking shoes** – if you plan to explore the trails

Payment Details

- 💰 **Cost:** \$20 per person
- 🏦 **Bank Account:** 12-3232-0318628-00
- 📌 **Account Name:** Waitakere Combined Rebus Club
- 💡 **Reference:** Please include your **surname** and **Miranda** in the payment details

This promises to be a **fantastic trip**, and we hope to see many of you there!

JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT COFFEE MORNING



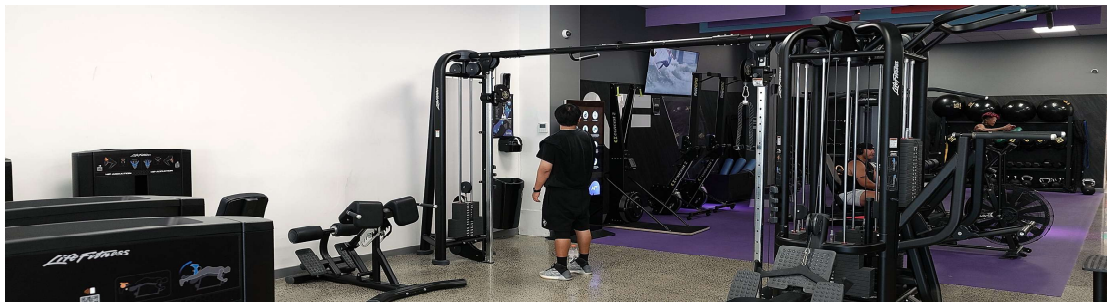
Club Coffee Morning at The Delicious Cafe last year March 2024

Mark your calendars for our next coffee morning on **Wednesday, 26th March, at 10:00 am**. We'll be returning to **The Delicious Cafe**, 547 Te Atatu Road, Te Atatū Peninsula.

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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 April meeting is Friday, 11th April.