



West Auckland Men's Rebus Club Newsletter

June 2025

Next meeting: 10:00 am Friday 13th June, Friendship Hall, 3063 Great North Road, New Lynn

COMMITTEE

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Hospitality	Trevor Pollard		817 8822
Attendance	Stephen David	sj david55@gmail.com	021641717
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Photographer	John Mihaljevic	john@rebuswestauckland.nz	098361504



Bill Mutch says Autumn is the best time of the year—members on the Wed 21st May 2025 bus trip at Highwic

MEETING REPORT

May 2025

Chairman: Bill Mutch

Attendance: 23 members

Members: Raymond Barrett, Neil Castle, John Corban, Stephen David, Vince Dennehy, Mensto De Roos, Bill Fairs, Maurice Forbes, Robert King, Vince Middeldorp, John Mihaljevic, Eddy Molloy, Bill Mutch, Andrew Narayan, Charles Nicholls, Trevor Pollard, Paul Robertson, Noel Rose, Alan Verry, Laurie Vincent, Ken Webster, Allan Williamson, Garrick Yearsley.

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chairman opened the meeting with a warm welcome, acknowledging the arrival of winter. A light-hearted reference was made to recent world events, including the appointment of a new Pope.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Ian Smith and Lyndsay Parris.



Morning tea in the Friendship Hall at the May 2025 monthly meeting

3. Matters Arising from March Meeting

No matters arising were reported. It was noted that the previous meeting must have been a good one.

4. Correspondence

The Secretary shared two items:

- **Rebus Club News:** Highlighted a humorous quote from the newsletter: "I wish I was half as good as my dog thinks I am."
- **Rebus Chronicles:** Mention of Garth Dutton, the Rebus NZ Chairman, currently touring the South Island and working on improving the Rebus website.

5. Trips

In Ian Smith's absence, the Secretary provided details:

- **Bus Trip to Highwic and Pahs Homestead:**
 - Organised jointly with Waitakere Rebus due to hall unavailability for their meeting.
 - Date: Wednesday 21st May. Departure: 9:45 AM from outside St John's Hall.
 - Cost: \$20
 - Members are advised to arrive early due to potential parking issues.
 - Payment details are available on the club website; please deposit into the Waitakere Rebus Club trip account and note your name in the particulars.

Only three members had registered, and further participation was encouraged.

6. Coffee Morning

- **Next Venue:** Sierra Café, Lincoln Road (Lincoln Centre).

7. Welfare Report

- **Stephen David** returned after surgery to remove part of his bowel. He is recovering well.
- **Lindsay Parris** is recovering from health issues and sends his regards. Described as cheerful during a recent phone call.
- **Trevor Pollard** underwent a leg bypass operation to improve circulation and is undergoing physiotherapy.
- **Laurie Vincent** is recovering from surgery to remove a growth on the head and is currently on antibiotics.

The Club extended well wishes to all members experiencing health challenges.

8. General Business

- No items of general business were raised.

9. Guest Speaker (Next Month):

- Noel Rose reported that the speaker for next month is pending confirmation.

10. Next Meeting

- Scheduled for: 13th June 2025

Claudia's Corner

How did the Morris dancer hurt himself?
He fell through the windscreen.

How did the tap dancer hurt himself?
He fell in the sink.

Waiter: Sir, how did you find the steak
Oh, easy, I just moved a chip, and there it was.

Diner: I would like an Elephant sandwich, please
Waiter: I am sorry Sir we ran out of bread.

Teacher: If Shakespeare were alive today, what
would he be famous for?

Student: Being over 400 years old, sir.

Optician: Have your eyes been checked before?

Man: No they've always been blue.

I've got to do my homework now, enjoy the winter meeting.
Cheers Claudia



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT **AGM 2025**

1. Opening and Apologies

The meeting commenced at 10:15am, chaired by President Bill Mutch. Apologies were received from Ian Smith and Lyndsay Parris.

It was also noted that Rex Billington has not attended for some time, and is considered inactive.

2. Obituaries

There were no member deaths during the year.

An update on Andrew Geddes was shared: he remains bedridden, but is more responsive and able to engage in conversation.

3. Confirmation of 2024 AGM Minutes

The minutes of the AGM held on 8th March 2024 were confirmed as a true and correct record. The minutes have been signed by Bill Mutch.

4. Correspondence

The club received the 2024 financial accounts from Rebus NZ.

Key points:

- Membership dropped nationally by 370, down to 3,054 members.
- The rising costs of the national AGM is a concern, increasing from \$4,384 (2023) to \$7,856 (2024).

5. President's Report

- Membership increased from 24 to 29 financial members in 2024.
- Club finances are strong, with cash reserves approximately \$400 beyond one year's operating costs.
- Active collaboration with Waitakere Combined Rebus, Alan Verry's Railway Enthusiasts Society, and Henderson Falls Club has enhanced activities.
- The newsletter and website are performing well.
- Recruitment efforts may benefit from promoting the club's value in building social connections—one of the key pillars of healthy ageing.

6. Financial Report

Presented by Charles Nicholls JP for the year ending January 2025:

- Cash book accounting shows surplus of \$348.67.
- Accrual accounting show loss of \$104.21 (due to lapel microphone depreciation).

Key observations:

- Healthy tea money income; informal contributions are increasing.
- Speaker honorariums are returned as donations when club members speak.
- Reserve fund is stable and earning interest, offering financial resilience.
- Recommendation: No increase in annual subscription due to strong financial position.

7. Trips Report

No formal report presented as Trips Coordinator Ian Smith was an apology.

8. Election of Officers

It was moved by Allan Williamson and seconded by Trevor Pollard: "That all current officers be retained in their positions for the coming year."

Motion passed unanimously.

9. Subscriptions for 2025

Moved by Charles Nicholls, seconded Alan Verry: "That the annual subscription remain at \$30."

Motion passed unanimously.

10. Bylaws

It was noted that the club is not strictly observing its bylaws (e.g. requirement for monthly committee meetings).

11. General Business

No other items of general business were raised.

12. Meeting Closure

The meeting concluded at 10:30am, on time for morning tea.

Members shared a few humorous stories and were reminded of the optional lunch at Denny's following the meeting.

PRESIDENT'S PRATTLE

Bill Mutch

I hope everyone enjoyed our May meeting as much as I did! When our guest speaker couldn't make it, we turned the situation into an opportunity by sharing our own stories. The result was interesting, fun and also informative—proof of the wonderful camaraderie in our club.

A special welcome back to Stephen David, who has returned after a stint in the hospital. It's great to have you back with us, Stephen!

For those who love travel, Glenbrook Vintage Railway (GVR) is advertising a 13-day South Island rail and coach tour, departing 3 September 2025 and finishing 16 September 2025. The journey begins in Christchurch and concludes in Queenstown, with the all-inclusive fare of \$7,790 covering rail, coach, and return flights from Auckland.

Having experienced many New Zealand rail tours myself, I can't recommend them highly enough. The rail routes take you through breathtaking landscapes—often inaccessible by road—and across towering viaducts, all from the comfort of a spacious carriage. For full details, simply search GVR online.

Finally, a reminder to wrap up warm for our next meeting—winter is here! Looking forward to seeing you all there.

Cheers
Bill Mutch

HOW THE NORTHERN EXPLORER PUT ME ON THE MAP (AND TV!)

Alan Verry (Gemini AI)



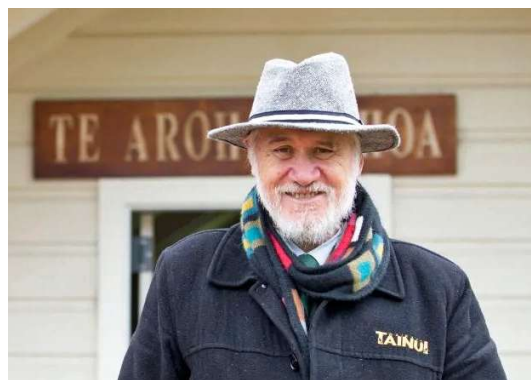
I've had a few people mention seeing me on TV a few weeks ago, so I wanted to quickly share how that came about.

It all started when Sky Open screened the series "World's Most Scenic Railway Journeys". Most of the episodes currently airing were filmed in 2020. For the Northern Explorer episode, the British production company contacted the railway club the year before, looking for contacts. Since I was there at the time, I gave them some contacts for the Tangiwai people and other relevant information. They then asked if I'd be willing to be involved, noting that I seemed to know a fair bit about the trip. I said I'd be happy to, and they even suggested I bring my wife. She was having medical issues then, so I offered to bring my sister, who used to travel the trunk line often.

That's how it all came together. They flew my sister up from Waikanae to Auckland on a Sunday night and put her up in the Heritage Hotel. Monday morning, we headed to the railway station at the Strand. I had no idea what the format would be. When we arrived, there was Phil Stebbing the cameraman, a young sound recordist, Margaret and I, a Maori gentleman named Professor Tom Roha from the Maniapoto tribe, and a Kiwi Rail marketing woman who had never ridden the Northern Explorer train before.



Alan Verry



Professor Tom Roa

We started off, leaving Auckland, and they said they needed a theme. Margaret suggested that she always used to try and stay awake, which led to the story about her trying to stay awake longer than me. As we travelled, they simply asked us questions, like one about the volcanoes of Auckland. Luckily, I'm keen on Geography, so I was able to answer it. What I didn't know then was that Tom Roa, the Maori Professor, was actually a Professor of Geography at Waikato University. Afterwards, he leaned over and said, I handled it pretty well and seemed to know a bit about it. We continued our journey, and of course, Bruce Morgan, the train manager, was there; I've known Bruce for years.

We got off in Wellington and didn't hear anything more at that stage. This filming took place on a Monday, and the country went into lockdown that Wednesday. The producer had actually flown from the UK over the weekend, arrived in Auckland, and called me from the airport, realizing how bad things were. She said she was on the next flight back to London, so we never even saw her. Then we all went into lockdown.

The next thing I knew, I got an email from friends saying they had just seen me on TV. That's how we found out. We got in touch with Claire, the producer, and she sent us a copy of it. I have a copy, but we haven't been allowed to distribute or present it.

To give you an idea of the impact these TV programs have, I've seen Bruce Morgan, the train manager, many times since. Kiwi Rail has probably gotten the biggest bang for their buck from that TV program than any other advertiser, with Europeans coming out to New Zealand because of it. It's been screened on TV in all major European countries as well as in the UK. Bruce has even had one Swedish woman visit four times, and they all want him to sign their menus.

Last year, I was on the train with a small group of our passengers from Palmerston to Taumarunui. There was a group of four in the cubicle in front of us. I spoke to them, and they had an accent, so I asked where they were from, and they said Denmark. The woman then said, "I recognize you, you're on the program." It's been amazing how many people have been enticed to come to New Zealand solely because of the Northern Explorer episode.

Three weeks ago, I got a text from an old Countdown friend who was on her way to the UK. She texted, "I've just landed in Vancouver, turned on the TV in the hotel and I saw you." So, currently, the series is screening nationwide in Canada.

MENSTO'S DUTCH DISCOVERY: A WARTIME TALE UNCOVERED

Vince Middeldorp (Gemini 2.5 Flash AI)

Mensto De Roos and his wife Ella have embarked on their annual Dutch retreat, escaping the New Zealand winter to explore the familiar landscapes of Holland with their trusty car and caravan. Before he left, Mensto promised to share any particularly interesting discoveries, and he has certainly delivered!

On Sunday, an email arrived from Mensto containing three photographs of the same subject: an aircraft propeller mounted on a plinth. Curiosity piqued, it became clear that the story behind this relic would be found on the plinth itself. While the original Dutch text posed a challenge, thanks to the wonders of AI, I quickly had a perfect English translation.

The inscription reveals a somber piece of wartime history: "On this spot, on the afternoon of November 29, 1943, a Lockheed P-38 Lightning of the 55th Fighter Group of the American Air Force crashed. The pilot, 24-year-old Lieutenant Alberto A. Albino, tragically died while on a bombing flight to Bremen. On his return journey to England, his aircraft was shot down by a German fighter. The rudderless Lightning plunged at tremendous speed, crashing right next to the railway station building between the rails, and disappearing deep into the ground. Lieutenant Albino had no chance to escape. The propeller was salvaged in March 1978 during the construction of a pedestrian tunnel nearby. The remains of Albert Albino were later repatriated to his birthplace in Portland, Oregon, USA, where he was laid to rest."



The Lockheed P-38 Lightning propeller

Mensto captured this compelling scene at Hoogeveen station, located in the province of Drenthe in the northeastern Netherlands. Drenthe is a place known for its expansive forests, beautiful heathlands, and traditional agricultural landscapes. This ancient region has been populated for 15,000 years, with archaeological finds hinting at a significant Bronze Age trading past.

Today, Drenthe is a popular tourist destination, particularly for outdoor enthusiasts, boasting hundreds of kilometres of well-maintained bike trails.

A huge thank you to Mensto for sharing this piece of history from his 2025 summer holiday in Holland.

IMPROMPTU MEMBER TALKS FILL THE GAP

At the May meeting, Bill Mutch explained that since the scheduled guest speaker had not arrived, he would invite everyone to share some memories instead. He directed everyone's attention to the overhead projector, which displayed various suggested topics ranging from work experiences to school memories. He invited participants to talk briefly for a minute or two on any topic that interested them, while emphasizing that participation was entirely voluntary - anyone who preferred not to speak could simply pass the microphone to the next person.

Third Choice Turns Out Just Right

Vince Dennehy



My first day as an internal auditor was quite memorable. I had gone through the interview process when my future supervisor came in from his holiday specifically to conduct the interviews. When I arrived for my first day, he had gone back on holiday for another couple of weeks. When he finally returned from his holiday and walked through the door, he stopped dead in his tracks. He just stared at me with this puzzled expression, then went straight into his office and shut the door. I was left wondering what on earth was going on?

About a year later, when he was retiring, he finally revealed the mystery. "There's something I've got to tell you," he said. "I never actually chose you for the job." It turned out that his first choice had declined the position, and I was actually third on his list. But as he said with a smile, "It all worked out in the end anyway."

The Great Reel Mix-Up

Mensto De Roos



I was working as a projectionist at a cinema when I had one of those moments you never forget. It was a matinee showing, and I was screening a Laurel and Hardy-style comedy for the kids.

Movies in those days came on six or seven reels, and a previous projectionist had mistakenly mixed up the reels. So there I was, everything going smoothly with the children's film, when suddenly the screen switched to a Brigitte Bardot movie - the French film star appearing in a bikini!

One horrified mother came rushing in, demanding to know what on earth I was showing. I had to explain that someone had put the wrong reel in the sequence, and I needed to find the correct reel to get back to the proper children's movie. It was quite the mix-up, I can tell you!

My First Day in the Pet Department

Bill Mutch



One of my first jobs was as a trainee supervisor at the Farmers Trading Company on Hobson Street, and I'll never forget my very first day. It was a Friday night during late-night shopping, and as a trainee, I got assigned to different departments. That night, I was put in the pet department with Hector, an old parrot that I had to feed sunflower seeds to.

The pet department boss was Jack Cunningham, and on Friday nights he would take appointments for customers to bring in their birds and other pets. I was the poor lad serving customers at the counter while he worked out the back. He gave me strict instructions: if any of the store bosses came near the department, I was to push a buzzer under the counter twice to warn him.

You see, Jack had a habit of drinking red wine on Friday nights - he kept bottles of wine in a drawer and would get quite intoxicated. Afterwards, I'd even have to drive his V8 home for him, despite not having a driver's license.

On this particular Friday night, an elderly regular customer brought in her budgie to have its claws clipped. Unfortunately, Jack was too drunk to perform the procedure properly and accidentally just about cut the poor bird's foot off. It was bleeding to death and, realizing what had happened, he put the budgie out of its misery.

When the lady came to collect her pet, I asked her to wait, then went out the back and told Jack the woman was at the counter to collect her budgie. He said to her that the budgie was too old and didn't survive the operation. She believed him, though the truth was quite different indeed.

A Sticky Start to My Apprenticeship

Trevor Pollard



My first day as an apprentice plumber was quite an introduction to the trade. I was apprenticed to a young plumber who had just started out on his own, and my mother - who could be quite persuasive - had talked him into taking me on.

When I knocked on his door that first morning, he looked me up and down and said, "I need you like a hole in the head. Get in the van."

We drove down to the corner of Rata Street to the old Kelston Lending Library - a two-story building. He set up the big extension ladder and handed me a tin of soft

black mastic and a trowel. His instructions were simple: "Wherever you can see a lead-head nail has popped, put a dollop of that on it. Same for any rusty holes you spot. And I hope you don't fall off."

By the time I climbed back down, the soft mastic was all over me - covering my hands and clothes. He made me keep it on for the rest of the day. Normally, any decent plumber would have a kerosene cloth in the van to clean it off, and he probably had one too. But I think he wanted to make sure I understood what I was in for.

A Close Call on the School Bus

Ken Webster



My worst memory from school days was actually the journey home. I lived about 5 miles out of Hamilton and was always the first boy off the bus on our route home.

In those days, they didn't worry much about safety regulations, and they would pack the school bus absolutely full. I was pressed right against the door with five other people standing in front of me on the steps leading up to the bus driver - that's how jam-packed it was.

As we were going around a sharp right-angle bend in the middle of Hamilton, the door suddenly gave way. I tumbled out onto the road and when I looked up, there was a truck that had stopped just about a foot away from me.

It was one of those moments that could have ended very differently, and I'll never forget the shock of finding myself on the road looking up at that truck bumper so close to my face.

The Student Who Wasn't a Student

Vince Middeldorp



I used to teach a subject called Electrical Measurements and Fault Diagnosis at the Auckland University of Technology. One day, about ten minutes into my class, a student stood up and said, "Sir, I've got a question for you."

"Yes, what's that?" I replied.

"Well, my TV set's broken down at home. Can you tell me how to fix it?"

I had recently been chatting with a retired lecturer called Tony Darcy, who had been repairing some TV sets. He'd shared a few tips about his successful repairs, including using a toothbrush to gently sweep across circuit boards - sometimes that would disturb a bad connection just enough to reveal where the fault was.

So I spent about ten minutes explaining what he could try to diagnose and possibly fix his TV set. He thanked me politely, and we continued with the rest of the class.

A little while later, I noticed him standing up with his bag under his arm, heading for the door. "Where are you going?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "I'm not actually enrolled in this class. I only came here to find out how to fix my TV set."

And with that, he walked out the door!"

Playing Truant in the Days of Hercules Penrith

Neil Castle



I was a student at Mt Albert Grammar School, and we had a maths teacher called Hercules Penrith. He was a very slight man - so thin that a strong breeze could almost knock him over. Despite his small stature, he rode to school on this enormous Indian motorbike, a really heavy machine that he would park outside the school hall.

One day, tired of the boys climbing on his bike and pushing each other around on it, he put a chalk mark right beside the wheel to check if anyone had been moving it. Well, the kids were too clever for that - they got out their own chalk and made marks all over the place, so poor Hercules couldn't tell whether his bike had been moved or not.

Around that time, I was playing truant from school quite regularly. It was an exciting time for a young lad, and I reckon I had at least three months off before I eventually went back.

When I did return, I told one of the teachers - I think it was Freddie Campbell - that I'd been away because I of the polio epidemic. He looked at me over his glasses and said dryly, "I hope you're feeling better now, Castle."

I was a real bad young sod in those days!

A PACKED HOUSE AT SIERRA CAFE'S COFFEE MORNING

Vince Middeldorp (Gemini 2.5 Flash AI)

When I stepped into Sierra Cafe for the coffee morning on May 28th, it was almost standing room only! Ian Smith counted twenty-five members in attendance, and that, combined with the cafe's regular customers, meant the small space was practically bursting at the seams. The proprietors, however, were visibly delighted with the bustling patronage.

Fortunately, a chair had been pulled up for me at the corner of a large, crowded table, nestled between Allan Williamson and Ian Smith. With Alan Verry sitting next to Allan Williamson, I knew the conversation would be as stimulating as the coffee itself (which, incidentally, was remarkably cheap by cafe standards — just \$5.50 for a large flat white).

One of the fascinating topics Alan Verry delved into was the surprising reason behind Waikumete Cemetery's location in Glen Eden. The city's existing cemetery in Symonds Street had become surrounded by housing and was at full capacity. A new cemetery was desperately needed, and the choice came down to two sites: one in Ellerslie and the other at "Waikomite," as the area was then known. Both were conveniently close to the railway line.

Waikomite ultimately won out due to its direct proximity to the Glen Eden Railway Station. This allowed for funeral trains to transport both mourners and the deceased. Alan even mentioned a disused railway platform a short distance from the Glen Eden Station where these funeral trains used to stop.

Alan went on to explain that The Chapel of Faith in the Oaks, which Trevor Pollard played a major role in restoring, was the original church where all funeral services were held. This historical tidbit clarifies why the church is located close to the Glen Eden township, quite a distance from the main cemetery entrance on Great North Road.



The Chapel of Faith in the Oaks is a historic chapel that was originally built as a mortuary chapel in 1886

A SURPRISE JOURNEY TO HIGHWIC: MORE THAN JUST A BUS TRIP

Vince Middeldorp (Gemini 2.5 Flash AI)

I'll admit, I wasn't expecting much from the bus trip to Highwic and Pahs Homestead. It felt more like a consolation prize, a way to make up for the St. John Hall being unavailable for the Waitakere Combined Rebus monthly meeting. But sometimes, the unexpected turns out to be the most rewarding.

Highwic, nestled in the heart of Newmarket with the distant hum of cars on the motorway flyover, turned out to be a place everyone in Auckland should visit at least once. It was the former home of Alfred Buckland, a name I'd never heard before, but whose story is truly remarkable.

Alfred and his wife Eliza (Elizabeth) arrived in Auckland on the *Sir Edward Paget* on December 18, 1850. They initially settled on land his older brother William had bought between Mangere and Papatoetoe. However, Eliza struggled with the isolated location, prompting their move to the city. In 1855, Alfred joined Joseph Newman in the bustling world of livestock auctioneering at the Newmarket sale yards.

The partnership of Newman and Buckland dissolved in 1856, and Alfred went on to establish his own venture, which later became Alfred Buckland and Sons Ltd. This company flourished, boasting sale yards on 50 acres at the corner of Great South Road and Market Road, with its head office on the corner of Wyndham and Albert Streets. In early 1858, Alfred made history by conducting New Zealand's first public wool auction on Queen Street Wharf, successfully selling all 250 bales on offer. By 1953, the company was still thriving, employing over 160 staff (many lifelong employees) and generating an impressive annual turnover of £7 million.

Highwic itself was built in 1862 on land Eliza bought for £1,000. Its distinctive Carpenter Gothic style was inspired by plans found in *The Architecture of Country Houses*, published in 1850. The family, with seven children already, moved in, and Eliza later had two more. Sadly, she died of pneumonia in 1866. The following year, Alfred married Matilda Frodsham, who was twenty years his junior. Together, they had eleven children, nine of whom survived to adulthood.

Alfred Buckland passed away in 1903 at the age of 78. *Te Ara, The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* fittingly describes him as a "notable progenitor" — a testament to his incredible twenty-one children: seven daughters and three sons with his first wife, and seven daughters and four sons with his second!

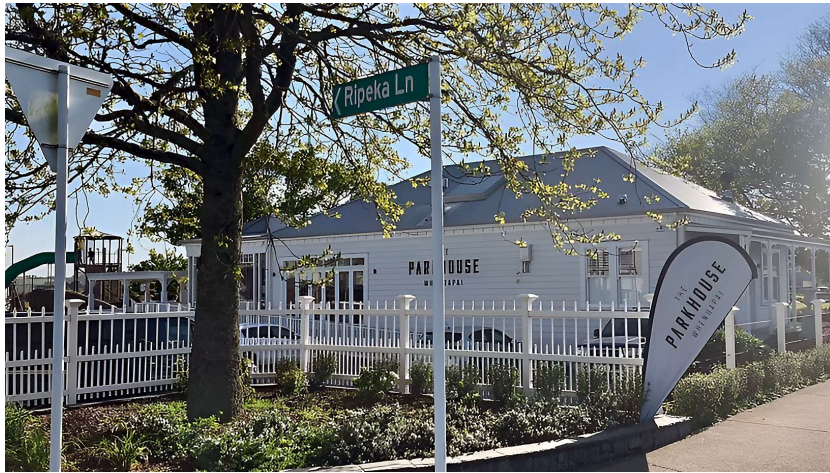
Buckland's descendants continued to live in Highwic until 1978. Thankfully, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and Auckland City Council jointly purchased the property, saving it from subdivision. Highwic opened its doors as a historic house museum in 1981, allowing us all to step back in time and appreciate this extraordinary piece of Auckland's past.



After exploring Highwic, we continued our journey through history with coffee and lunch at Pahs Homestead

MID-WINTER LUNCH RETURNS TO PARKHOUSE CAFE

Ian Smith reports that while there are no trips or coffee mornings planned at present, the popular mid-winter lunch will be returning to the Parkhouse Cafe in Whenuapai, just like last year.



The Parkhouse Cafe & Eatery is located at 1 Ripeka Lane, just 300 m before the Whenuapai shopping centre



Last year's event had a great turnout, with the best spots in the restaurant filling up quickly

The lunch is scheduled for Wednesday, 25th June at 11:30 am. Ian would appreciate members indicating their attendance for the lunch at the June monthly meeting so he can make appropriate arrangements.

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 July meeting is Friday, 11th July.