



# West Auckland Men's Rebus Club Newsletter

**July 2025**

**Next meeting: 10:00 am Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July, Friendship Hall, 3063 Great North Road, New Lynn**

## COMMITTEE

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*Allen Greenland, Raymond and Suzanne Barrett, Noel and Merilyne Rose at the Parkhouse Cafe in Whenuapai*

## MEETING REPORT

*June 2025*

**Chairman: Bill Mutch**

**Attendance: 21 members**

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

### 1. Date and Time

Friday June 13<sup>th</sup> 2025 at 10:00 am.

### 2. Apologies

Mensto De Roos. Ian Smith and Stephen David were noted as absent.



*Lyndsay Parris and Neil Castle catching up during morning tea at the June meeting*

### 3. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

Matters arising from the main meeting were brief, with little to report.

### 4. Correspondence

**Council Inquiry about Lapel Microphone:** The council inquired about the lapel microphone Bill uses, which was purchased in November 2023. A Magness receipt, dated 6th November 2023, showing, "Invoice paid in full," was sent to the council, with hopes that no further action will be required.

**Website Contact Form Message:** A message was received via the website's contact form. The message was in Russian and translated to, "Escort girls" and "call girls in St. Petersburg," specifically noting, "They're the best."

### 5. Financial Report

Vince was thanked for identifying and correcting small errors in the accounts.

**Tea donations** were reported as "pretty good."

**Total funds:** \$1,539.34.

**Interest accrued:** \$4.61.

The treasurer Charles Nicholls may not be available for the next meeting but suggested that presenting the accounts in two months might be acceptable as they are consistently similar.

### 6. Trips and Coffee Mornings

No trips or coffee mornings were currently planned.

### Mid-Winter Lunch

- **Location:** Park House Cafe in Whenuapai

- **Date:** Wednesday, 25th June.
- **Cost:** There is no set fee; attendees will order directly from the menu.

**Ryder's Movie and Lunch:** Trevor Pollard suggest a combined event for later in the year.

## 7. Welfare Report

No welfare reports were received from members. Steven David was noted as missing from the meeting again.

## 8. Guest Speaker (Next Month):

- **Speaker:** Niall Robertson.
- **Topic:** Transport.
- **Background:** Niall serves as the Chairman of the Passenger Transport Users Association (PTUA) and is involved in the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT). He is actively advocating for improved train services.

## 9. General Business

**Plantation House Fire:** An update was provided on the *American Queen* paddle steamer trip Allan Williamson took down the Mississippi. The plantation house Allan and his wife Joanne visited, Nottoway, caught fire in May and burned down. Some people who saw it as a "symbol of slavery" were reportedly cheering its destruction. Photographs showed the top story ablaze and its remnants.

## 10. Next Meeting

Scheduled for: 11th July 2025

## 12. Meeting Close

The meeting concluded at 10:33, with attendees encouraged to enjoy their break and look forward to the guest speaker.

## Claudia's Corner

Passenger: Why has the train stopped?  
 Train Manager: Oh, we have hit a cow.  
 Passenger: Was the cow on the tracks?  
 Train Manager: No, we had to chase it over a field!!!

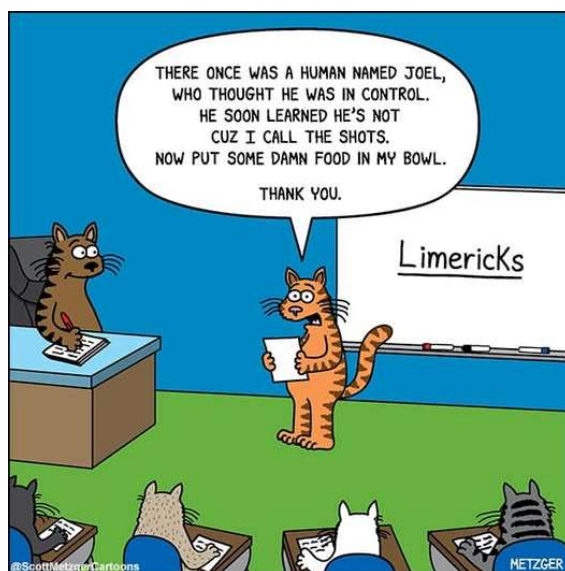
What has 2 humps and has been found  
 at the South pole?  
 A very confused camel.

Why did the sailor grab a bar of soap when  
 his ship sank?  
 To wash himself ashore.

What did the ghost teacher say to her class?  
 Watch the whiteboard, and I will  
 go through it again.

What is brought by the metre but worn by the foot?  
 Carpet.

"It's school holidays now, so I get to sleep in—but since I've got my full driver's licence, Grandad will be keeping me busy! Cheers, Claudia.





## ***PRESIDENT'S REPORT***

### ***July Newsletter***

***Bill Mutch***

A big warm welcome from me to all our members.

With the winter solstice behind us on 21 June, we can look forward to the gradual return of longer days as winter begins its retreat toward spring.

I'm pleased to report that I haven't received any phone calls about members being unwell, which is always encouraging news for our group.

I do apologize for being difficult to reach over the past couple of weeks. My Parkinson's has been playing up more than usual, but I'm happy to say things have settled down now and I'm back on track.

#### **Community Reminders:**

- If you have grandchildren under 16, don't forget that council-operated swimming pools offer free entry for them - a great way to keep the kids active during the school holidays.
- New Zealand's first IKEA store is opening soon at Sylvia Park mall, promising some excellent furniture deals. If you're thinking about any furniture purchases, it might be worth waiting for their opening. The store is likely to be very busy initially, so I'd recommend taking the train to Sylvia Park station (remember, it's free with your Gold Card) rather than driving.

Looking forward to seeing you all at our July meeting.

Cheers,  
Bill Mutch  
President

## ***BEYOND THE BUBBLE: MY JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL REALITIES IN NEPAL***

***SEAN MARSTON***

***Google Notebooklm***



*Speaker organiser Noel Rose with June's guest speaker Sean Marston*

For the last 30 years, I've been deeply involved in aid and development work, travelling extensively across Africa, Asia, and South America. For the past nine years, I've had the privilege of heading up the New

Zealand office of the International Nepal Fellowship (INF), an organisation dedicated to supporting the people of Nepal. My journey into this field began early; I grew up in a family where my parents were always involved in community service, instilling in me the important value of giving to others.

When I mention Nepal, many of you might immediately think of Everest and Sir Edmund Hillary, and there are certainly natural connections. But Nepal is far more than just its famous peaks. It's a country roughly the size of New Zealand's South Island, but home to a staggering 30 million people. Imagine living in a landscape where 20 million or more of those people reside in areas akin to the middle of our Southern Alps. This means that everything we take for granted – building houses, roads, schools, medical facilities, and even growing food – becomes incredibly complicated and messy.

INF has been on the ground in Nepal since 1952. Until then, Nepal was a closed country, making it illegal for foreigners to reside there. When the borders opened, some medical professionals went in and were given land to start a leprosy hospital in Pokhara, the second-largest city. The perception of leprosy in Nepal hasn't changed for thousands of years; if you have it, you're considered an outcast, barred from your community and village. So, what began as a leprosy hospital evolved into broader disability work. One of the most unusual statistics from Nepal is that the second-largest cause of death is people falling out of trees – a stark reality when you need firewood to cook and heat your home in mountainous regions.

Our work has grown significantly since then. We support three hospitals, with two focusing specifically on people with disabilities and leprosy. Crucially, INF is now primarily a Nepali-run organisation, employing 450 Nepali staff who work in hospitals and communities. This is vital because they possess the language and cultural understanding to truly serve their own people. While there are still about 20 expats involved, their role is primarily in support systems, like being surgeons or IT specialists.



*Staff at Green Pastures Hospital, established by INF in 1957 as the Green Pastures Leprosarium*

Nepal faces numerous challenges, many rooted in long-standing cultural beliefs. The caste system, though officially illegal, still operates in everyday life. We've chosen to work with the lowest caste, the Dalits, also known as the "untouchables" – a term that reflects the severe social exclusion they face. The treatment of women is another critical area. Nepal is a patriarchal society where women have limited say or roles. Two particularly tough traditions stand out:

**Fistula:** A medical condition often resulting from difficult childbirth in poor countries, leaving women with continuous discharge. Though an hour-long surgery can fix it, women with fistula are often cast out from their families due to the constant smell.

**Period Sheds:** In remote hilly areas, women on their period are considered unclean and forced to live for days in small, rock and tin-roof sheds. Tragically, a percentage of them die each year from snake bites,

scorpion stings, or freezing to death, all driven by the belief that spirits will punish them if this tradition isn't followed.

Historically, development work often failed because external "experts" would come in with money, impose solutions, and then leave. These projects often collapsed because they weren't what the community wanted. There was also a flawed belief that if you taught men skills, the whole family would benefit. However, men often proved to be selfish, spending money on themselves or abandoning their families. After decades of experience, we realised that to foster healthy families and communities, you must empower mothers. Women, by nature, tend to prioritise their family and community first.

About 15 years ago, INF totally transformed its approach. Instead of just providing money, we now focus on self-help groups, primarily for women, or groups of lower-caste individuals and people with disabilities. For the first year, these groups simply meet to share their stories, discuss community issues, and explore solutions. Only after a year do they begin discussing financial support for projects they themselves deem important. This process has been transformative, teaching women confidence and skills, enabling them to gain more say in local politics and their communities. For instance, a lot of women are now being voted into ward and bigger councils because they have found their voice.

One of our "win-win" initiatives is the smokeless stove program. In many one-room huts, open fires cause smoke to fill the living space, leading to respiratory problems, eye issues, and burns, especially for women in saris. For just \$120, we provide and install stoves with flues that vent outside, preventing fires and smoke inhalation. Crucially, these stoves use half the amount of wood compared to open fires. Since collecting firewood is traditionally the responsibility of girls and young women in Nepal, this means they spend less time on this chore and more time attending school. We're also helping communities to employ forest rangers to prevent illegal logging and deforestation, as they understand the importance of forests for preventing landslides and future income.

Living in New Zealand, I often feel we exist in what I call a "bubble" – a nice, generally comfortable place in the Pacific. While we have our own issues, compared to much of the world, we're very fortunate. But this comfort can disconnect us from global realities. My older supporters recall a time in the 1950s and 60s when information about the world was scarce – newspapers, radio, and movie news reels. Now, our kids and grandkids have instant access to news and images of suffering worldwide. Yet, paradoxically, some older New Zealanders feel we were more connected and responsible then.

I worry that New Zealand society has become more individualistic and selfish. This focus on "my life" and "my happiness" can lead to a loss of meaning, especially for younger generations, who are experiencing high rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Research shows that younger generations are becoming more inward-looking, which affects social organisations and community groups. We need to renew our interest and connection to what's happening globally, not just for others, but for our own well-being. It's about remembering that even with our own issues, we have a "backstop" that many other countries simply don't.

Nepal, for example, faces environmental challenges like being the third most impacted country by climate change, even without a coastline, due to melting glaciers and adverse weather. Its economy relies heavily on external income, with about a third coming from Nepali workers overseas and electricity exports to Bangladesh and India. While they have universities and train many people, there aren't enough jobs, leading to a brain drain as educated youth leave for countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

Despite all these challenges, the Nepali people are wonderfully happy and welcoming. They embody an incredible hospitality, often offering their best to guests even when they have little. It's truly humbling.

Part of my role is raising awareness of Nepal's realities and needs. But it's not just about awareness; it's about asking: how can we be involved? How can we make a difference?. For those who wish to help, one unique fundraising initiative we have is collecting foreign coins, notes, or old New Zealand currency. It's a simple way to contribute without significant cost, as these are often just sitting unused in people's homes.

Thank you for allowing me to share a glimpse into Nepal and the vital work INF does. It truly highlights how lucky we are in our corner of the world, and why it's so important to look beyond our own borders.



## **MID-WINTER LUNCH AT THE PARKHOUSE CAFÉ**

*Vince Middeldorp & Deep Seek AI*



*Twelve people crowded around the corner table on the veranda*

On Wednesday, June 25th, members of the West Auckland Men's Rebus and Waitakere Combined Rebus clubs gathered for their 2025 mid-winter lunch at The Parkhouse Café in Whenuapai. Set in a charmingly converted farmhouse, the venue offered a cosy atmosphere, with our members seated on the covered veranda—a welcoming retreat from the winter chill.

A total of twenty-six members and partners attended the event, including eight from our club. Initial responses had been slow, with just four confirmations received by the West Auckland Men's Rebus secretary by late Sunday. However, direct contacts with organiser Ian Smith and last-minute additions brought our club's turnout to a respectable eight.

This year's gathering followed a simpler format than last year's, when we began with a visit to Totara Waters subtropical garden before lunch. This time, we headed straight to The Parkhouse Café, where our group occupied three tables on the veranda, making up the majority of the café's patrons that afternoon.



*Alan Verry, Maurice and Jan Forbes and Waitakere members filled the eight places at the second table*

Service was both prompt and friendly, with a cheerful waitress ensuring everyone was well attended to—especially appreciated by those of us, like Alan Verry and myself, who had to depart early for other commitments.

Despite Whenuapai's seemingly remote location—requiring a drive past the "Motorway Ends" sign on the North Western Motorway, followed by a right turn onto Brigham Creek Road—the journey took no more than 25 minutes for most. Allen and Phyllis Greenland deserve special mention for making the longest trip, joining us all the way from their retirement village in Warkworth. The fine winter weather was a welcome bonus; we could easily have faced the cold, wet conditions that often mark the depths of winter.



*Vince Middeldorp, Ian Smith (behind the camera), and some ladies from Waitakere Rebus were at the third table*

Parking proved slightly challenging, with only a small parking area at the café and nearby residential streets lined with cars on both sides. Nevertheless, most attendees found a spot without much trouble and had only a short walk to the venue.

Looking ahead, our next scheduled event is the annual Christmas lunch. In the meantime, Alan Verry is exploring an additional outing—a roast meal and movie at Ryders on Riversdale Road in August, for the Railway Enthusiasts Society. If this comes to fruition, it will be another opportunity for members to socialise in great company and inviting surroundings.

## ***TE HUIA TRIP TO HAMILTON WITH THE RAILWAY ENTHUSIASTS SOCIETY***

### ***Vince Middeldorp***

On Tuesday, 24 June, members and companions from our club joined the Railway Enthusiasts Society for a scenic rail adventure aboard the Te Huia service to Hamilton, expertly organised by Alan Verry. Our group included Eddie and Colleen Molloy, Andrew and Linda Narayan, Charles Nicholls, Vince Middeldorp, and Beth Jenner—a friend of Linda's and widow of Jack Jenner, who served as President of the New Lynn Men's Probus Club in 2010.

Departing from The Strand railway station, we discovered that Te Huia bypasses Newmarket via the Southern Line and instead follows the picturesque Eastern Line. This route offered views of Hobson Bay and passed through Orakei Station. The comfortable carriages—ex-British Rail models from the 1970s—added a touch of class to the journey. These carriages are expected to retire by the decade's end.

Our destination was Rotokauri Station, located at The Base shopping centre—home to numerous big-box stores and the Te Awa Mall, which opened in 2011. Alan had arranged a special \$20 lunch of hamburgers and chips at the Foundation Bar and Kitchen. The restaurant's inviting atmosphere provided a more refined dining experience than the bustling food court, where some opted to have lunch instead.



For those with a sweet tooth, the outing also offered a chance to visit Coupland's Bakeries Te Rapa Factory Shop. Alan Verry shared he regretted not going there, reminiscing about visits to Coupland's in Christchurch during business trips.



*Alan Verry, wearing his red RES cap, gets ready to board the Te Huia service at Rotokauri Railway Station*

This excursion was also a show of support for the Te Huia rail service. Currently funded through June 2026 by NZ Transport Agency (70%) and Waikato local authorities (30%), its long-term future hinges on strong patronage. Encouragingly, the number of passengers observed boarding at Rotokauri suggests growing popularity.

A heartfelt thank you to Alan Verry for organising this outing. We're already looking forward to more adventures with the Railway Enthusiasts Society.

## **NAVY BAND SENIOR CITIZEN CONCERT 2025**

***Vince Middeldorp***

This year marked the 24th Navy Band Senior Citizens Concert in Te Atatu. I only became aware of the concert on Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup> and subsequently emailed members about it on Saturday, June 21<sup>st</sup>. The concert itself took place on Wednesday, June 25<sup>th</sup>.

There was a slight clash with the mid-winter lunch, which was held on the same day. However, with the lunch starting at 11:30 am and the concert at 1:30 pm, there was ample time to enjoy lunch at the Parkhouse Cafe before heading to the Te Atatu South Community Hall for the concert.

In previous years, the concert had always been held at the Te Atatū North Community Centre. This year's change of venue was due to the Navy Band passing the concert date to the Henderson–West Auckland Lions Club. Unfortunately, the North Hall was already booked. The band bases the concert date on the availability of its members, ensuring they are not on duty or away from the Devonport Naval Base.

The new venue, the Te Atatu South Community Hall, was smaller, and parking was a concern. The day before the concert, some Lions Club members assessed the ground and deemed it firm enough for cars to park on the grass. I was directed to park on the grass behind the St John Hall and was quite apprehensive about getting stuck. My fears were almost realised, as after the concert, I witnessed a van being towed from the grass at the front of the St John Hall, and another bogged in the mud behind the hall, with a wooden board under one of its front wheels. Thankfully, I was able to drive onto the asphalt without any issues.

As always, the Navy Band delivered a lively and varied programme. While not every piece resonated with me, there were some memorable moments. One notable performance was a young bandsman from Tonga who sang vocals for Frank Sinatra's Fly Me to the Moon—a solid effort, though not the highlight of the afternoon. That honour went to the rousing Radetzky March by Johann Strauss Sr., first performed in 1848. It was the concert's encore, and had the entire hall clapping along—arguably the finest military march ever composed.

I spotted several of our members at the concert, including Andrew and Linda Narayan, who were seated in the row behind me. John McKeown sat in the row behind them, while John Mihajevic was at the opposite end of the same row as me.



*Chief Petty Officer Michael Miller, band leader, addresses the audience at this year's Senior Citizens Concert*

As is customary, afternoon tea was provided, and most attendees stayed to enjoy it. Morrisons provided the cakes and savouries, which I presume to be the funeral home rather than the florist.

### **NEXT COFFEE MORNING**

Ian Smith has emailed to say the next coffee morning is on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July at Kings Plant Barn, 224 Universal Drive, Henderson. No start time from Ian, but it will be the usual 10:00 am.



### **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 August meeting is Friday, 8th August.