



# West Auckland Men's Rebus Club Newsletter

**October 2025**

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

## COMMITTEE

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Welfare Officer	Bill Mutch	<a href="mailto:celebrantwedding@gmail.com">celebrantwedding@gmail.com</a>	021316556



*Lorraine Clark holding her coffee cup from the Wintergarden cafe, Andrew and Linda Narayan, John McKeown and Bob Jessop, enjoying their day out to Auckland's Wintergardens in the Auckland Domain.*

## MEETING REPORT

*Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2025*

**Chairman: Bill Mutch**

**Attendance: 20 members and 5 visitors**

Members: Neil Castle, John Corban, Stephen David, Vince Dennehy, 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 Watson, Ken Webster, Allan Williamson, Garrick Yearsley. Visitors: Mike (prospective new member), Owen Schultz, Bobby Bland.

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting opened with a welcome and sound system check.

### 2. Apologies Received

Apologies were noted from the following members: Mensto De Roos, and Lindsay Parris.



*Morning tea, September meeting at the Friendship Hall: Allan Williamson and Charles Nicholls in conversation; John Mihaljevic looking into the camera.*

### 3. Correspondence

The Rebus Club news was received and circulated to all members. Henderson Falls Friendship Club organising a trip to the Domain Wintergardens and lunch at New Lynn RSA (\$30 per person). Members encouraged to contact the secretary if they missed the email.

### 4. Treasurer's Report

- Membership: 27 paid members.
- Income: Subscriptions \$720, Donations \$250 (includes speaker fee returns), Morning tea \$266, Bus trip receipts \$506. Total \$1742.00.
- Expenditure: Hall hire \$464.00, Speakers \$300, Capitation \$112.50, Bus trip \$500. Total \$1,376.50.
- Surplus: \$365.50
- Funds held: Main account: \$1,400.34. Reserve/online account: \$712.85.
- Outlook: On track to break even for the year. No subscription increase required.

### 5. Trips and Coffee Mornings

- Coffee Morning: Sierra Cafe, Lincoln Road, on Wednesday, September 17th.
- Winter Gardens Trip: Mentioned above under Correspondence.
- Proposed Bus Trip (Whatipu):

Trevor Pollard reported on inquiries regarding a trip to the Whatipu museum. The museum would open for a cost of \$50 for a full busload. The new committee was unhelpful regarding kitchen use for tea; members would likely need to take their own lunch or purchase items from the nearby store. Bus company for this trip is yet to be confirmed (Ian Smith is managing, likely using Peter Verryt's Day Trip and Touring).

## 6. Welfare Report

Trevor Pollard has been hospitalised three times since the last meeting.

## 7. Speaker for Next Month

No speaker was confirmed as the organiser's list was misplaced, but several prospects remain.

## 8. General Business

**Discount Register:** The committee intends to create a register of preferred local service providers (dentists, tradies, etc.) and venues that offer excellent service or Gold Card discounts.

- **Examples shared:** A brilliant, cost-effective Taiwanese denture specialist; **Burger King** offers a **20% Gold Card discount** any day of the week; **Mitre 10** on **Lincoln Road** offers a **10% Gold Card discount** (Note: this is not universal across all Mitre 10 stores).
- Countdown stores offer a **5% discount on Tuesdays** (location dependent, confirmed for Lincoln Road and Blockhouse Bay, though Blockhouse Bay is closing soon).
- **Total Mobility Card (TM Card):** Members were encouraged to look into applying for a TM card, noting it provides highly subsidised taxi fares for those with a disability (requires a doctor's certificate).

**Meeting Time Review:** The President proposed reviewing the meeting time (currently 9:59 a.m., but often starts later) to a possible 1:30 p.m. start, similar to other successful clubs. **Members voted to leave the time as it is.**

## 8. Next Meeting

Second Friday of the month (Friday, October 10th).

*The meeting adjourned for morning tea.*

## Claudia's Corner

**Teacher:** What do you want to be when you grow up?

**Pupil:** I want to follow in my father's footsteps and become a detective.

**Teacher:** Oh, is your father a detective?

**Pupil:** No, he's a burglar. I want to catch him.

**Did** you hear about the man who ran a successful flea market?

**He** started from scratch.

**What** training do you need to be a litter collector?

**Nothing,** you will pick it up as you go.

**How** did the baker get an electric shock?

**He** stood on a bun and the current got him.



Chicken serial killers

**Son:** Dad, I got a part in the school play.  
**Dad:** That's great! What role did you get?  
**Son:** I play a man who's been married for twenty years.  
**Dad:** Wonderful. If you do it well, maybe next time they'll give you a speaking part.

**Pupil:** Should I be punished for not doing something I don't like?

**Teacher:** No.

**Pupil:** That's good, as I didn't do the homework.

Enjoy the spring meeting,  
Cheers Claudia.

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT – OCTOBER**

**By Bill Mutch**

A warm welcome to all our members as we head into spring! I hope this newsletter finds you all feeling well and keeping well.

At our last meeting, we discussed compiling a list of local businesses that offer discounts for Gold Card holders. I will start off with three:

- **New World (Most Locations):** Every Tuesday, receive a **5% discount** on your shop when you spend over \$50. Please note: The New Lynn New World offers this discount with **no minimum spend**. This discount even applies to items already on special.
- **Burger King:** Present your Gold Card when ordering to receive a generous **20% off your total order**. This great deal is available every day with no limits.
- **Dentic Dental Clinic (201 Taylor Street, Blockhouse Bay):** Offers a **5% discount** to Gold Card holders. They provide amazing service, with a new set of dentures starting at around \$1,900. They have good parking available and can be contacted at **09 948 2202**.

### **Member Speaking Day**

I would like to gauge interest in holding another "Member Speaking Day" in the near future. This is a wonderful opportunity for members to share stories, hobbies, or expertise. I will formally propose this at our next meeting so we can schedule a date.

I look forward to seeing you all at the October meeting.

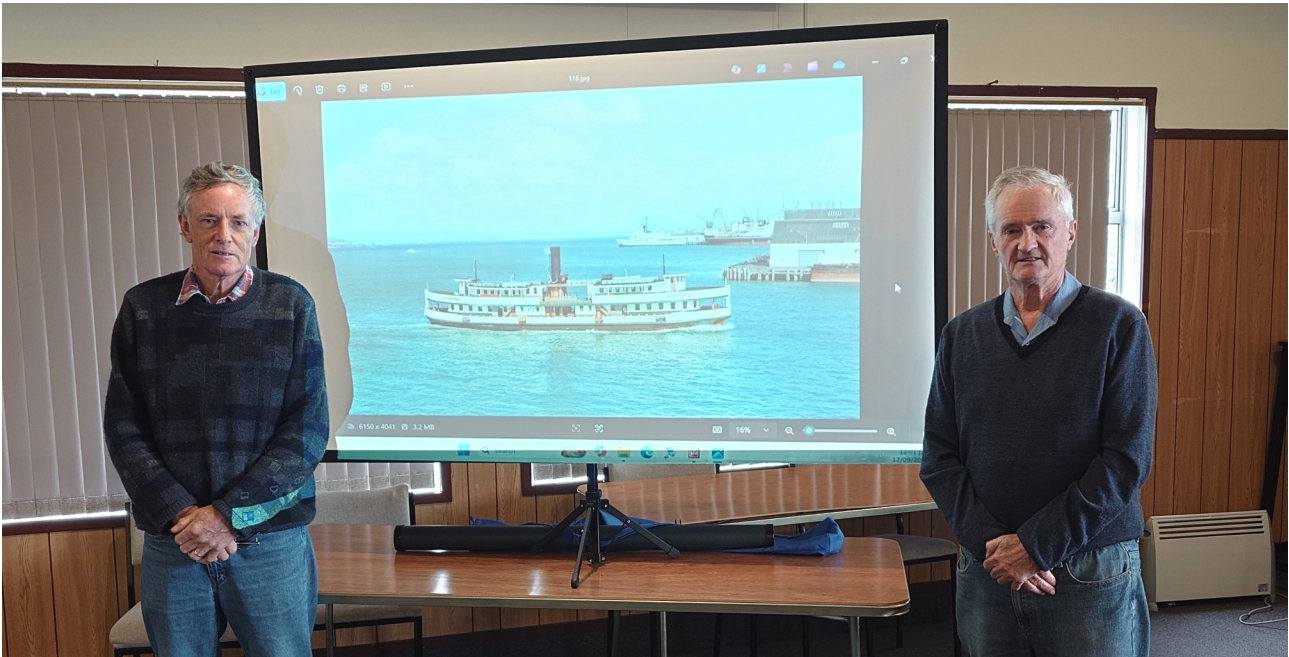
Cheers,  
Bill Mutch

## **THE TOROA: RESTORING AUCKLAND'S HISTORIC STEAM FERRY**

**Notebooklm & Vince Middeldorp**

Members of the West Auckland Rebus Men's Club recently had the privilege of hosting Robert Brown and Peter Henley from the Toroa Preservation Society, who delivered an insightful talk about the ongoing restoration of the historic double-ended steam ferry, Toroa. Their presentation, drawn from decades of dedicated involvement, offered a fascinating glimpse into the vessel's past, the colossal challenges of its restoration, and the inspiring vision for its future.

Both Robert and Peter have been intimately involved with the Toroa since the mid-1980s. Their commitment intensified significantly after the boat tragically sank in 1998, marking a continuous journey that has seen the vessel rise from the depths to its current state of meticulous reconstruction.



*Robert Brown and Peter Henley from the Toroa Preservation Society*

### ***A Pioneering Design: The Double-Ended Ferry***

The Toroa, launched in 1925, was the last of eight ferries built to a remarkable design chosen by the ferry company owners in the early 1900s. These visionaries travelled all around the world looking for designs used in other cities for short ferry journeys. Their conclusion was that a double-ended design was best. This innovative configuration features a propeller and rudder at both ends of the ship, along with a wheelhouse at both ends. The genius of this design is its efficiency: they just go back and forth without wasting time turning around. Such ferries were common in harbours like Hong Kong, Sydney, and San Francisco.

Remarkably, the Toroa's original efficiency stands the test of time. The journey from the city to Devonport, which took 15 minutes in 1925, still takes about the same time today. Similarly, the original crew of four is much the same as what ferries have now, though one crew member now mans the coffee shop.

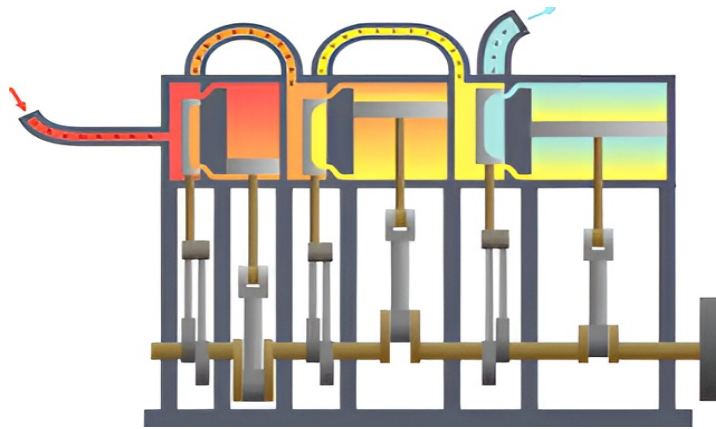
### ***The Heart of the Toroa: The Triple Expansion Steam Engine***

Central to the Toroa's operation is its standard marine triple expansion steam engine, a marvel of early 20th-century engineering. Robert and Peter explained this "Rolls-Royce of steam engines," which reuses steam multiple times for extraordinary efficiency.

The process begins with high-pressure steam entering a small cylinder, driving the piston down and then back up—making it double acting. This partially spent steam then flows into a larger, intermediate-pressure cylinder. Although the pressure has dropped, the increased piston size ensures the same mechanical force is maintained. Finally, the steam moves into an even larger, low-pressure cylinder, where it delivers its last burst of energy before being drawn out.

The key to the engine's remarkable efficiency lies in the condenser. Positioned on the opposite side of the engine, it rapidly cools and condenses the steam back into water, creating a vacuum that helps pull steam through the system. This closed-loop design means that, in theory, with no leaks, the only water you lose is when you blow the whistle. The concept of using a separate condenser was pioneered in the late 18th century by Scottish engineer James Watt. In marine applications, the boiler typically operates at around 180 PSI, prompting Robert Brown to quip that it's "like a bomb waiting to go off."

To change direction, the skipper would lock the forward rudder, switch the navigation lights, and move to the other wheelhouse. The propeller shafts are permanently connected to the engine, with no gearbox or clutch, and operate at a maximum of about 100 revolutions per minute. This main engine, along with all auxiliaries, power generators, and pumps, are all run by the boiler.



*Double-acting triple-expansion marine engine. High-pressure steam (red) passes through three stages, exhausting as low-pressure steam (blue) to the condenser. Steam enters the top of each cylinder to push the piston down and enters the bottom of each cylinder to push the piston up.*

### ***From Service to Near Demise***

The Toroa faithfully served as a ferry until 1980, when its survey expired. The opening of the Harbour Bridge in 1959 had a profound impact on ferry services, leading to many being laid up. The Kestrel, converted to diesel in the early 1950s, along with the Toroa, which retained its original machinery, were among the few that continued operations. Other ferries faced bleak fates, and the talk highlighted a recurring theme in Auckland: the unfortunate loss of much of its maritime heritage.

The first Toroa preservation society was founded in the mid-1980s, with the boat initially located at Wilson Cement Wharf before relocating to Birkenhead Wharf. This is when both Robert and Peter became actively involved.

Then came the crisis of 1998. Exposed to the elements at Birkenhead Wharf, the Toroa succumbed, sinking one Sunday morning. The subsequent salvage operation was monumental. The initial attempt to float the 250-tonne vessel using airbags failed. It took a month before the salvage was successful. During this period, the vessel lost its entire top superstructure due to wave action. Jim Mason, chairman of the New Zealand Maritime Trust, is credited with saving the Toroa from being cut up.

### ***A New Home in West Auckland***

Following the salvage, an opportunity arose for a new home on vacant land in West Auckland, owned by Radio New Zealand. The relocation, costing \$100,000, was an epic undertaking. The boat was relaunched off a slipway in the city, with large steel rollers placed beneath its keel. Two tugs towed her up the creek on a spring high tide. Heavy Haulage tow-trucks and a massive triple block and tackle anchored to a 12-ton concrete and steel deadman then hauled the Toroa to the top of the boat ramp. This achievement is believed to be the biggest boat at 250 tonnes pulled out of the water anywhere in the southern hemisphere other than into a commercial slipway.

Five days later, Tranzcar Heavy Haulage lifted the Toroa a metre above the ramp and lowered it onto a 112-wheeled trailer. The trailer was then towed by four trucks (2000 horsepower in total) off the ramp and half a kilometre up Selwood Road. The move took eight hours to complete.

Upon arrival, the site was just a big gravel yard. The next two years were dedicated to providing services on the site, undertaking detailed measurements of the entire ship and producing comprehensive engineering drawings.

### ***The Restoration: Rebuilding a Legacy***

The Toroa is of composite construction, a blend of timber and steel. One of the most significant challenges was replacing the corroded bulb angle ribs, some so rusted you could put your hands through them. The steel for these new ribs had to be custom-ordered from a mill in England, which remarkably still possessed the

original dies from 1924. A volunteer engineer developed an ingenious system using a torch with LPG and oxygen to heat sections to cherry red, then operating a winch to slowly pull the end around. He has successfully shaped about 70 of these complex ribs.



*The Toroa being hauled on the 112-wheel trailer to its current site on Selwood Road.*

The restoration approach is from the inside out, painstakingly rebuilding the internal structure. This has involved replacing all the longitudinal bulkheads and continuous steel plates running all the way around the vessel. The entire process has taken about 23 years.

A staggering 10,000 rivets have been used, all hot riveting as per the original construction. Additionally, around 10,000 bolts were used for the deck, often requiring kango hammers to remove old ones without damaging the timber.

The boiler restoration involved thorough surveying, water blasting, and pressure testing. Fortunately, a nearly identical 1979 boiler from a floating crane was acquired. Looking to the future, the society is embracing environmental innovation. Instead of coal, they plan to use mulched off-cuts from an outdoor furniture factory mixed with pine resin and extruded into sausages. This fuel burns hotter than Huntly coal and produces significantly less ash.

For timber components, long lengths of Kauri were sourced from dead standing or fallen trees in the Coromandel, requiring helicopter extraction and DOC and iwi permission. Macrocarpa was obtained from a Henderson council reserve. These timbers are milled on site. A historic moment recently occurred when the sheer strake was put back on the vessel. Both wheelhouses have also been painstakingly restored.

### ***Funding, Volunteers, and the Future Vision***

The Toroa Preservation Society operates on dedicated volunteers and crucial funding. Peter Henley estimates a need for a million dollars a year for five or six years. Initially, they were advised by Lotteries and ASB (now Foundation North) to identify parts of the project rather than asking for all the money at once. This strategy worked well for about eight years, funding pretty much all the steel work. The society currently relies significantly on private donations.

A significant hurdle is the classification of the Toroa as movable heritage, often meaning lower priority for funding. Robert Brown is actively advocating for changes to council policy on this issue, asserting that while the Toroa may not be a place, it certainly holds a place in Auckland's history.

Despite these challenges, the vision for the Toroa is clear and inspiring. The plan is to have it back on the water in the harbour doing what the TSS Earnslaw does on Lake Wakatipu in Queenstown—operating as an excursion ferry for school groups, tourists, and whoever else wants to venture onboard. Its size and stability will make it a great viewing platform for anything happening on the harbour. Robert and Peter stressed their desire for the Toroa to be an operating steam show in Auckland, not merely a floating restaurant. They draw inspiration from successful restorations like the James Craig at the Sydney Maritime Museum and the Polly Woodside in Melbourne.

The dedication of the Toroa Preservation Society is palpable, with volunteers often on-site on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. People are welcome to visit on Wednesdays, or they can arrange special group tours.

## ***A DAY AT THE WINTERGARDENS***

***Claude AI & Vince Middeldorp***

On Wednesday, the 1st of October, four of our members joined the Henderson Falls Combined Friendship Club for an outing to the Auckland Domain Wintergardens, followed by lunch at the New Lynn RSA.

The trip came about when Ian Smith contacted us three weeks beforehand to say Henderson Falls had spaces available on their coach and could accommodate 19 more people. The club was subsidising the trip for all participants, keeping the cost to just \$30 per person – covering both the coach hire and lunch. It was too good an opportunity to pass up, especially given our previous outings with Henderson Falls had been such wonderful experiences.

Some of you will remember our movie and lunch at Ryders in Avondale back in November 2023, and more recently, that memorable Red Boats trip to Riverhead in March this year. The harbour cruise was particularly special – there's something magical about being out on the Waitemata on a fine day.

Peter Verryt from Day Trip and Touring Co. drove us in his coach, expertly navigating off the motorway at Newton Road, down Khyber Pass, and into Park Road before winding through to Domain Drive. He parked perfectly on Kiosk Drive, right between the Wintergarden Café and the Wintergardens entrance.



*The Domain Wintergardens were created after World War I and are now a Category 1 listed heritage site.*

Now, if you've never been to the Domain Wintergardens, you're missing out on one of Auckland Council's true jewels. This treasure of historic interest features two magnificent barrel-vaulted Victorian-style glasshouses facing onto an extensive courtyard with a beautiful sunken pool. Inside, you'll find rare and spectacular plants, and at this time of year, a stunning collection of chrysanthemums in an ever-changing display.

Our group wandered through both glasshouses, and most ventured into the fernery – built on the site of a former quarry, it's the coolest spot where ferns flourish in the shade. But it was the first glasshouse that really took our breath away. The flowers were in full bloom and looked absolutely spectacular – a riot of colour and beauty. Honestly, it was worth going on the trip just to see that magnificent display. Mind you, some blooms were starting to show their age and wilting slightly, as expected after several weeks of spectacular flowering.

What strikes you about the Wintergardens is how serene it is, despite being virtually in the centre of Auckland City. Several of our group took full advantage of this tranquillity, sitting on the seats in the terraced area between the glasshouses, soaking up the sunshine. It's one of those places where you can truly relax and let the world slow down for a while.

After our leisurely wander through the gardens, we headed to the New Lynn RSA for lunch. For those of us who'd never been there before, it was a pleasant discovery – a familiar local spot not far from home that clearly has excellent caterers. The lunch was superb, and it provided a perfect setting for socialising with our friends from Henderson Falls.

Before boarding the coach for the return trip to Henderson, Bob Jessop gathered everyone for a group photo. Getting all 26 people lined up against the bus and squeezed together so nobody was left out of the frame was quite the exercise, but Bob managed it with good humour.

This trip reinforced what a good relationship we're building with the Henderson Falls Combined Friendship Club. They've included us in some wonderful outings, and hopefully we'll be the first people they think of when they need extra numbers to make a trip viable. Of course, it should work both ways – we should be contacting them too when we're organising events. This kind of collaboration benefits everyone.



*Freyberg Restaurant at New Lynn RSA has deservedly become a go-to dining destination in New Lynn.*

Which brings me to a gentle word about our turnout. While we had a marvellous time, it's a shame that only four of us from West Auckland Men's Rebus Club made it on the day. This was another example of members not realising what they're missing out on. At \$30 for transport, a visit to one of Auckland's finest gardens, and a delicious lunch, it was exceptional value. More importantly, it was a chance to enjoy good company, see something beautiful, and make the most of what our city has to offer.

So here's the thing: when opportunities like this come up, give them serious consideration. You never know what memorable experiences await just around the corner.

### **NEXT COFFEE MORNING**



The next coffee morning is on **Wednesday, October 22nd**, at **Gloria Jean's Cafe**, The Boundary Shopping Centre, 5 Vitasovich Ave, Henderson. Start time is the usual 10:00 am.

## EXPLORE HUIA: A COASTAL DAY OUT

Join us on **Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> November**, for a scenic outing to Huia, a coastal gem in West Auckland's Waitākere Ranges.



### Itinerary

- Depart: 9:30 am from St John Hall, Edmonton Rd
- Return: ~2:30 pm



### Stops

1. Henderson Mill Cottage (Sel Peacocke Dr)
2. Coffee break in Titirangi
3. Huia Settlers Museum



**Lunch** [Alfred's Huia Store](#) offers fish & chips and fast food. Prefer something else? Bring your own lunch and drinks.



**Commentary** Trevor Pollard may be well enough to join us with his insights.



### Cost

- \$20 per person.
- Pay to: Waitakere Combined Rebus Club
- Acct: 12-3232-0318628-00



*In 1853 the Gibbons family from Newfoundland arrived at Huia, setting up a mill for kauri logging. The Gibbons family were joined by William and Mary Kilgour, who established a farm in the flatlands at Huia, and the Foote family, relatives of the Gibbons also from Newfoundland.*

## SUPPORTERS



We hold our meetings at 10:00 am on the second Friday of each month at New Lynn Friendship Hall, located at 3063 Great North Road. The date for our November meeting is **Friday, November 14th**.