



# West Auckland Men's Rebus Club Newsletter

**December 2025**

**Next meeting: 10:00 am Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> December, Friendship Hall, 3063 Great North Rd, New Lynn**

## COMMITTEE

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*Trevor Pollard receives his Life Membership certificate from Sir Bob Harvey, Patron of the West Auckland Historical Society, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to preserving and sharing the region's history.*

## MEETING REPORT

*Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2025*

**Chairman: Bill Mutch**

**Attendance: 26 members and 1 visitor**

Members: Neil Castle, John Corban, Ewen Clark, Stephen David, Mensto De Roos, Bill Fairs, Maurice Forbes, Robert King, John McKeown, Vince Middeldorp, John Mihaljevic, Eddie Molloy, Bill Mutch, Andrew Narayan, Charles Nicholls, Lyndsay Parris, Trevor Pollard, Paul Robertson, Owen Schultz, Mike Turnwald, Alan Verry, Laurie Vincent, Ken Watson, Ken Webster, Allan Williamson, Garrick Yearsley.  
Visitor: one visitor.

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting commenced, with a welcome extended to attendees for the "summer meeting".

### 2. Apologies Received

The following apologies were noted: Noel Rose, Ian Smith, Bobby Bland, Gary Marshall.



*Morning tea at the November meeting in the Friendship Hall, with members (left to right): Bill Mutch, Bill Fairs, Laurie Vincent, Robert King, Ken Webster, and Ewen Clark.*

### 3. Correspondence

Two items of correspondence were discussed:

- **Rebus Newsletters:** The Secretary contacted Steve Sullivan regarding the club's content not appearing in the national Rebus Club newsletters. Mr Sullivan confirmed the club's emails were ending up in his Gmail "updates folder".
- **Grant Application:** An application for a \$700 grant was submitted to the council. The money was applied for to cover \$390 for the hall hire and the remainder for printing costs of the newsletters. The decision will be made on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and the club informed a few days later.

### 4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer advised that updated figures would be read out, as the figures initially displayed may have been incorrect.

- **Motion: Morning Tea:** It was moved and seconded that **\$40 be paid** for morning tea related to the Huia trip.
- **Motion: Honorarium for Vince:** A motion was moved and seconded that **Vince be paid an annual honorarium of \$100** for his printing and website related costs, due to him spending his own money on these items.
- **Financial Summary:** The total subs and donations stood at \$1865. Expenditure was \$1592.50, meaning the club is about **\$272 up on the year**. Total funds/reserves were reported to be approximately \$2000.
- **Recommendation:** The Treasurer recommended maintaining the annual fee at \$30.



## 5. Trips and Coffee Mornings

- **Trip Report (Trevor Pollard):** The recent Wednesday trip had **31 attendees**. The itinerary included Swan's Arch, Tui Glen, the Oratia Hotel (now the Falls Hotel/Aldermans), Mill Cottage, Corban Arts Estate, Waitakere Cemetery (where saving the Chapel in the Oaks was discussed), Huia (lunch/museum stop), and Little Huia to see the Lower Huia Dam.
- **Chapel in the Oaks Event:** Trevor mentioned a related free event on **Sunday the 14<sup>th</sup> December** at 7:00 pm (advised arrival at 6:30 pm). The event will feature a piper, ladies playing stringed instruments, opera singers and a children's choir from the Methodist Church. A bucket will be placed at the door for donations to the Friends of Waitakere Cemetery.
- **Christmas Lunch:** Ian Smith reported low numbers (15 booked) for the lunch at Hughes of Cheltenham. During the meeting, additional bookings were secured for Eddie Molloy (two), Maurice Forbes (two), Mike Turnwald (two), and Trevor Pollard. Cost is \$45 (self-drive) or \$55 (bus).
- **Next Coffee Morning:** Scheduled for **Wednesday, the 26th**, at the **Corban Arts Center** (2 Mount Lebanon Lane).
- **Future Trips (Alan Verry):** Planned trips include the Hop Card trip to Waiheke for Christmas (November 27th), Glenbrook for train lights (December), and the William C. Daldy boat racing Anniversary Day (January).

## 6. Speakers for Next Month

The next meeting will feature three in-house speakers:

- **Laurie Vincent:** Speaking on how he became an athletics coach.
- **Neil Castle:** Presenting a film/video on his brother Len (approx. 10 minutes).
- **One additional speaker is required:** members were asked to volunteer during the tea break.

## 7. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for **December 12th**.

### *Claudia's Corner*

**What** happened to the stupid sea scout?  
His tent sank.

**Why** do birds fly north for the winter?  
Because it is too far to walk.

**Patient:** I keep dreaming I am covered  
in gold paint.

**Doctor:** I think you have a guilt complex.

**Where** do frogs leave their coats  
In the cloakroom.

**Where** do frogs get their eyes tested?  
At the hoptician.

**Son:** That piece of fish had a bone in it.

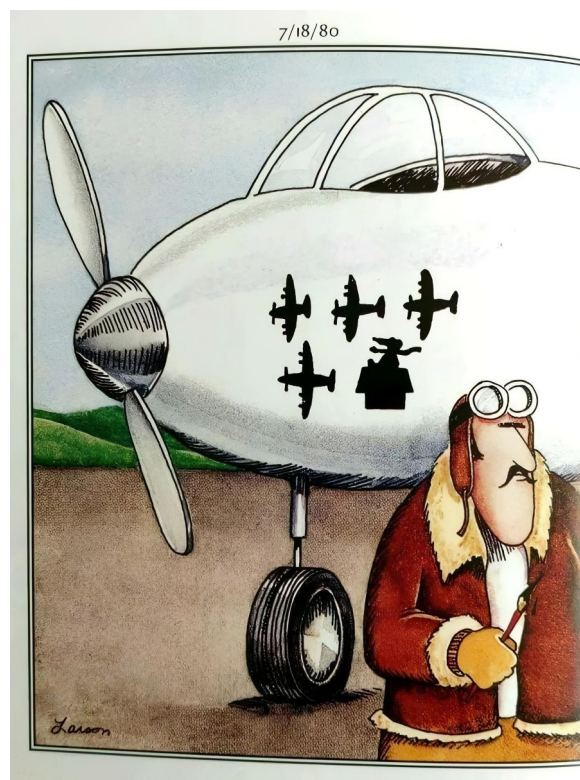
**Dad:** Are you choking?

**Son:** No, I am serious.

**What** is a twack?  
Something a twain runs on.

**What** do you call a man  
with a car on his head?  
Jack!

Merry Christmas--Claudia.



## **A FINAL MESSAGE FOR 2025: REFLECTION, GRATITUDE & FESTIVE WISHES**

### **President's Report – December**

**By Bill Mutch**

Welcome to our final newsletter for 2025. I hope this message finds you all keeping well as we approach the festive season.

Christmas is a time for family and togetherness, but it can also draw our thoughts to loved ones no longer with us. We hold cherished memories of those we've lost, both in our personal lives and within our club family. In moments of reflection, I find comfort in the simple sentiment:

*"Do not weep that they have gone,  
but smile that they have been."*

My own wife passed 19 years ago, and while I miss her every day—especially during Christmas—I treasure the time we had. This season, let us all remember and celebrate the wonderful club members who have journeyed with us over the years.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to every member who has contributed time and effort this year. Our club thrives because of your dedication in various roles, and I am profoundly grateful.

Unfortunately, due to my health, I will be unable to join you for this year's Christmas lunch. I will certainly be thinking of you all, and I know the venue is wonderful. As a celebrant, I've had the pleasure of conducting weddings there—it always receives excellent reviews!

Our club has had a fantastic year, enriched by a series of engaging guest speakers. Our final speaker remarked on how friendly and welcoming our group is, which was lovely to hear.

Looking ahead, sharing trips with other clubs is a great way to boost participation. I highly recommend the Christmas Lights event at the Glenbrook Vintage Railway—it always gets fantastic feedback.

A final reminder: from Christmas until late January, the Auckland train network will be shut down for maintenance. Please plan ahead, as rail replacement buses will be in operation.

As we close our final meeting for 2025, please know that I value each and every one of you. Wishing you all a peaceful, joyful holiday season and a wonderful start to the New Year.

Cheers, **Bill Mutch**

## **AN EXPLORER'S HEART: HONOURING THE LEGACY OF ANNE INNIS DAGG**

**Vince Middeldorp (Notebooklm)**

Dr. Anne Innis Dagg is often called the 'Jane Goodall of giraffes.' I'm her granddaughter, Tina Bedggood, and I'd like to share her remarkable story, the challenges she overcame, and the crucial conservation work our foundation is carrying on today.

### ***The Original Giraffeologist***

My grandmother's profound love for giraffes began when she was just three years old during a visit to the Brooklyn Zoo in Chicago. When she returned home to Canada, she found there were no giraffes, no books, and nothing published about them. This lack of information fuelled her passion, making her determined to go and find out more, feeling it was her job to fill this void.

Going to Africa to study animals in the 1950s as a single woman required an explorer's heart, especially since there was virtually no infrastructure for such research. Initially, when she wrote letters requesting permission to study on land in Africa, she received several letters back apologetically stating she could not come because she was female, citing safety concerns during the apartheid era.

My grandmother, however, never saw herself as defined by gender; she considered herself simply "a person". To circumvent the bias, she wrote back using "A. Innis," which worked. A gentleman, Mr. Matthews, wrote back offering her land to study on. Before she left, her own mother advised her that if she got married and had kids first, the Africa trip would never happen. Anne chose Africa.



*Tina Bedgood shares her grandmother Dr. Anne Innis Dagg's pioneering story—from a determined young woman who defied 1950s barriers to study giraffes in Africa, to the conservation legacy that continues today through the Anne Innis Dagg Foundation.*

When she finally arrived in South Africa in 1956, after a thousand-kilometre journey in the car she had bought with her savings, she received a quick note back from Mr. Matthews: "Oh, stop. Hold on. No, no, no, no, no. I didn't realise you're a female". But Anne replied that she was already on her way, forcing him to reluctantly agree to try and make it work.

She dedicated 8 to 10 hours a day to her studies, documenting every behaviour of the giraffe. Her book on the giraffe is still considered the 'Bible' for giraffe zoologists.

One remarkable aspect of her time there was her relationship with the African Zulus. My grandmother treated them as people, not caring about their colour or background. While others stood aside, she encouraged Zulu workers, like the man who needed a lift to the doctor, to sit in the front of her car and talk, which they found odd because white people did not typically treat African people this way. This legacy of human equality is something our foundation carries on: "we're just people and at the end of the day, it doesn't matter what colour you are".

### ***Fighting for Women's Rights***

When Anne returned, she married my grandfather (who had waited for her, communicating through letters) and continued her academic work, publishing papers and books. However, when she applied for tenure after four years, she was declined. She resigned and began fighting for women's rights in various sciences, having found many women who were unable to secure jobs.

She felt that she was forgotten. Sixty years later, however, a zoologist discovered she was still alive and felt she needed to be honoured. In 2020, she was awarded the Order of Canada, and she was honoured at the Brooklyn Zoo with thousands of zoologists present. Tragically, my grandmother passed away last year at the age of 91. Today, her work continues to be highly valued; in fact, David Attenborough is currently narrating a part of her movie at the Natural Arts History Museum in London.

### ***Continuing the Legacy: The Foundation***

Following the release of the movie about her life, Anne wanted to continue conservation work, so we established the foundation. Our pillars focus on education, conservation, nourishment (teaching planting),



and prevention. We aim to inspire young people on the ground in South Africa to love and care for these animals, as this is the only way to make a difference.

### ***Our Foundation Tours***

We host tours to support our work and allow others to experience the land. We intentionally avoid the busiest game reserves so visitors can see the animals exhibiting their normal behaviours, unlike the typical ten or fifteen trucks crowded in one place.

We work closely with various organisations, including Project Rhino, a 24/7 anti-poaching team utilising helicopters, drones, and dogs. We learned about the sophisticated tactics of poachers and the difficult nature of arrests—if poachers run outside the reserve boundary, the rangers can do nothing to them.

Our tours also educate people about animals like the pangolin, which is the most endangered animal in the world, with a population decline exceeding 80%. They are heavily poached for their scales, which are sent to Asia. We also visit places like St. Lucia, renowned for its hippos, which famously leave the water at night around 6:00 pm to graze in parks, sometimes walking casually along the roads.

### ***Wild Tomorrow and the Research Centre***

One of our key partners is an organisation called Wild Tomorrow, which is dedicated to buying back land that has been sold off for crops or resorts, returning it to wildlife. They started with 50 acres and have now reached 3,466 acres, and their giraffe population has grown from zero to 34 (with a new baby born just recently).

My grandmother is actually buried there. Earlier this year, we took her ashes back to Wild Tomorrow, planted a tree, and unveiled a plaque. We brought a bit of New Zealand back with us by performing a Māori prayer and song in both Māori and English.

They are currently revamping a purchased piece of land, previously used as a hotel and golf course, into a conservation research centre, which they are naming the Anne Innis Dagg Research Centre.

### ***Supporting Future Leaders***

We invest heavily in education. We have sponsored two young female giraffeologists—Simangele (an African Zulu woman who only learned English three years ago) and Scarlet from the States—to complete their master's degrees. We want Simangele, in particular, to become a role model for other African Zulus who face immense poverty, showing them that a career in conservation is possible.

We also spend time in very rural African Zulu villages, going right into their traditional huts (called Umuzi). We see the next level of poverty there. Our driver, Thabani, for example, often works from 6:00 am until 7:00 pm (or 11:00 pm including cleaning) but only earns 300 rand a day (about \$26 NZD), regardless of the hours he works, and receives no pay if he is sick or there are no transfers. These families have very little government support and rely heavily on extended family.

We also work with local schools, where classes can have up to 84 students. We were shocked to find that some of these children, who live only about a kilometre away from the safari routes, have never seen a giraffe, rhino, or zebra. We paid for them to go on their very first safari tour, as finding a passion for wildlife can inspire them to pursue conservation careers rather than resorting to poaching, which offers more money than traditional labour.

### ***Final Thoughts on Legacy***

The Anne Innis Dagg Foundation is devoted to continuing her work through education and conservation efforts worldwide. This includes projects like our Junior Giraffe Club for kids (7–17) and an upcoming New Zealand/Australia tour in March next year. My grandmother's work is even being used by Microsoft in a new AI conservation tool, and we are investing in Hero Rats to detect poached animal parts.

My grandmother started as a three-year-old girl who fell in love with a giraffe at the zoo, and that passion has led to this incredible legacy. We are proud to keep sharing her story.

## TRACING WEST AUCKLAND'S PAST: MILL COTTAGE TO HUIA

*Vince Middeldorp (Grok AI)*

On a bright Wednesday morning, 12 November, a busload of members set off from St John Hall at 9:30 am for what proved to be a packed but thoroughly enjoyable day exploring some of West Auckland's historical gems.

The itinerary was, shall we say, ambitiously optimistic – Swan's Arch, Tui Glen, Mill Cottage, Corban Arts Centre, Waikumete Cemetery, Huia Settlers Museum and the Lower Huia Dam, all to be squeezed into a 9:30 am – 3:00 pm window! Trevor Pollard solved the problem by insisting on proper stops at only two places, with drive-by appreciation of the rest.

Our driver, Peter Verryt, ignored warnings that the bus couldn't possibly get out of Tui Glen because of the non-stop traffic on Edmonton Road. He drove into and then all around Tui Glen. When we arrived back at Edmonton Road, the traffic in both directions miraculously stopped to let the bus out. A rare courtesy on Auckland roads!

Next stop: Mill Cottage in Henderson – a somewhat late addition to the itinerary that turned out to be the absolute highlight for many of us. Negotiating the steep little rise into the parking area produced an alarming scraping noise and, Peter's rear bumper was bent upwards (nothing a bit of brute force couldn't fix).



*Mill Cottage in Sel Peacocke Drive with Peter's bus in the cottage car park. Mill Cottage is the heritage/research centre for the West Auckland Historical Society and is open from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm on Saturdays.*

Mill Cottage itself was a delight. Pride of place outside the front door goes to an official Auckland Council notice declaring the building does not meet earthquake standards and ordering the owner to take remedial action. The owner? Auckland Council. You couldn't make it up!

Inside, the walls are covered with fascinating old photographs. One in particular caught the eye: Francisco Rodrigues Figueira on horseback. Because his name proved difficult to pronounce, Aucklanders nicknamed him Don Buck. He was a tough but fair Portuguese gum-digger who ran a 250-acre camp on the outskirts of Henderson. His camp became an unofficial "halfway house" for Auckland's ne'er-do-wells, petty criminals, remittance men and waifs and strays. Thanks to an arrangement with the magistrates, minor offenders could choose two weeks digging kauri gum under Don Buck's watchful eye rather than two weeks in the overcrowded Mount Eden prison. He ruled with an iron hand, a ready knife, and a reputation for swift retribution if anyone abused his hospitality!

After Mill Cottage we headed to Huia for lunch and the Huia Settlers Museum. The plan was to split into two groups – one touring the museum while the other ate lunch in the adjacent Settlers Hall, then swap. In practice, those who started lunch were in no hurry to move, so some of us had a very leisurely meal and only a lightning visit to the museum before it was time to re-board.

One interesting snippet picked up at the museum desk: the Turner family connection to Huia. Edward Turner (born Tredgett) settled here in 1891 with (reportedly) a second family, having left a first one behind in

England. His third son, Harvey Turner, went on to found Turners and Growers – the company that pioneered strawberry exports, but will always be remembered for the masterstroke of renaming Chinese gooseberries “kiwifruit” in 1959.

Shortly before we left Huia, the heavens opened, turning the drive along the Manukau Harbour to Little Huia into a rather misty experience. The rain cleared just enough for us to appreciate the impressive Lower Huia Dam, completed in 1971 and the largest of the five Waitakere water-supply dams.

We rolled back into St John Hall just after 3:30 pm – a little late, slightly damp, and knowing a bit more about West Auckland history. A great day out that can’t be done justice in a newsletter article.

Many thanks to Ian Smith and Trevor Pollard for organising, Peter Verryt for his comfortable coach, and everyone who came along and made it such an enjoyable trip.

## **CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2025 – FROM MT EDEN TO MCHUGHS**

### **Vince Middeldorp (Grok AI)**

Once again, Ian Smith decreed that our annual Christmas Lunch would be held at McHughs of Cheltenham, the beachfront buffet restaurant in Devonport with its panoramic views across to Rangitoto. For those who have forgotten (or who weren’t with us in 2022 for the mid-winter lunch, and in 2023 and 2024 for the Christmas Lunch), this was our fourth visit.

The day began with the coach collecting members from St John Hall, behind the Ambulance Station on Edmonton Road. Because McHughs doesn’t open its doors until 11:30 am, Ian arranged a morning tea stop at the Friend and Whau Café and Maungawhau Visitor Experience Centre on the lower slopes of Mt Eden.

The exterior of the iconic Spanish Mission-style tea kiosk, built in 1929, looked weary and past its prime. Some of us remembered it in the 1970s and 80s when it housed Langton’s Restaurant and Reception Centre. The café itself was beautiful inside, and the coffee excellent. The woman barista making the coffees turned out to be from Moscow. Alan Verry discovered this vital piece of intelligence, which explained why my flat white arrived sporting latte art in the shape of a bear!



*Inside the Friend and Whau Café, a group of Waitakere Combined members gathered at the table on the left. Ian Smith, in a black shirt, strolls between the pillars toward the Visitor Experience Centre. On the right, Maurice and Jan Forbes sit with Colleen and Eddie Molloy, enjoying the opportunity to converse.*

Ian gently chided those of us who failed to wander down to the far end of the café to admire the historical photographs in the Visitor Experience Centre. Guilty as charged — I was thoroughly distracted by Trevor Pollard’s son Doug, proudly showing me photos on his phone of his magnificently restored 1970s Ford F100 pickup. Bright red paintwork, a fully re-upholstered interior — an absolute stunner. Doug, now based in the USA, had flown home to spend the weeks leading up to Christmas with his father.

After visiting the cafe, the coach continued on to Devonport. Sitting high in the bus seats gave everyone a grand view of the elegant villas and gardens of the North Shore. Alan Verry reminisced about the days when he worked at the local Countdown; apparently, the Christmas relief staff on the Shore were a different breed



from those in West Auckland – the North Shore students disappeared overseas with their families while West Aucklanders cheerfully took over the spots left by staff on Christmas leave.

McHugh's lived up to its reputation for location—the views were superb—but the buffet had clearly slipped since our first visit in 2022. The lovely roast potatoes have been replaced by boiled potato chunks, the broccoli I piled onto my plate was practically raw, the bread rolls were now wholemeal only, and the individually wrapped butter portions had given way to a butter/vegetable-oil spread that can only be described as “white slime.” Even the fruit salad was a disappointment—mostly raw apple. On the plus side, the ham with mustard was still excellent, and I loaded my plate with as much of it as I could without attracting too much attention.

The price this year for the bus and the meal was \$55 (up from \$50 in 2024), and frankly, the meal didn't quite justify the cost. Online reviews suggest I am not alone in noticing a decline: “Great views and friendly staff but the food was a letdown” and “Quality has slipped considerably” are two reviewer's comments.



*At McHughs, elegance meets laughter. Andrew Narayan (standing left) has just sparked a laugh from Allen Greenland. Ian Smith strolls between the tables, with Anne and Mike Turnwald seated to his left.*

While we were having our meal, the heavens opened. Thunder, lightning and a tropical-style downpour turned the gutters into rivers. Mike the coach driver, borrowed a golf umbrella from McHughs and we made a dignified (if slightly damp) ferryman-style chain to the bus. Special mention to Doug Pollard, who gallantly returned the umbrella to the restaurant and then sprinted back through the deluge.

The journey home was predictably slow — Devonport traffic doing what it does best — a reminder of how fortunate we are in West Auckland, where wide arterial roads, keep things moving even at peak times.

Despite the culinary disappointments and the wet finale, it was – as always – a most enjoyable day in excellent company. Many thanks to Ian Smith for organising everything and to our bus driver Mike for the scenic drive through residential streets in Devonport.

## **JOINT COFFEE MORNING AT THE COFFEE STUDIO**

**Vince Middeldorp (Grok AI)**

Our November coffee morning took us to the delightful Coffee Studio, nestled among the historic Corban Estate winery buildings. As cars rolled in, a large Ritchies coach sat in the car park and the café was already humming. For a moment I wondered if I'd stumbled into someone else's party—but no, the sea of familiar Rebus faces told the real story. The striking photo of the Coffee Studio that graced the front page of this newsletter in November clearly did its job in tempting members out to the coffee morning.

The owner greeted us with a good-natured grumble that nobody had thought to warn her we were descending en masse. Despite the ambush, she and her team rose to the occasion superbly, keeping the coffees and cabinet treats flowing at a cracking pace. Her only regret? Not having a few extra tables and chairs ready on the sunny veranda—but we rearranged things ourselves and everyone found a perch.

A gentle pre-warning from Ian Smith had prepared us for the café's firm no-disposables rule: bring your own cup for takeaways. Sure enough, a couple of arts-centre locals breezed in with keep-cups in hand, clearly old hands at the local “regimen”.

Inside, the décor carried quiet political undertones — one member declined to buy after noticing a ‘Free Palestine’ poster. Conversation was cheerful, though mostly within each club rather than across them.



*Noel Rose seems to have found a chair for Maurice Forbes, while Alan Verry (in the black shirt with white trim) chats about his upcoming trips. On the far right, John McKeown is absorbed in one of Alan's flyers*

One thing that came out of the conversation around my table was how busy and fulfilling retirement can be when you say “yes” to a variety of groups. Maurice Forbes, for instance, not only belongs to Mt Albert U3A but has recently joined the Irish Club in Morningside (heritage apparently not required!). He thoroughly enjoyed their recent coach trip to the Kauri Museum at Matakohē—a timely reminder that retirement often offers more interesting things to do than full-time work ever did.

All in all, it was a lively, friendly morning in a character-filled spot. Ian Smith chooses our coffee venues, but chances are we'll be back at the Coffee Studio before too long.

### ***NEXT COFFEE MORNING AT THE SIERRA CAFE***

Ian Smith has advised that our next coffee morning will be held at **Sierra Café** on **Wednesday, January 28th, 2026**. This means we'll take a short break, with no coffee mornings scheduled between our December meeting on Friday, December 12th and our January meeting on Friday, January 9th. For those who haven't visited Sierra Café before, it's located at the **Lincoln Centre**, a shopping complex on Lincoln Road. The centre is home to several large retailers, including **The Warehouse, Spotlight, Stationery Warehouse, and Noel Leeming**. The address of the Lincoln Centre is 111/115 Lincoln Road.

### ***SPEAKERS FOR DECEMBER MEETING***

We have three club speakers lined up for the 11:00 am to 12:00 pm slot on Friday, December 12th, 2025. **Laurie Vincent** will share the story of how he became an athletics coach, accompanied by plenty of photos and a video. **Neil Castle**, despite joking that he has “lost his voice,” will speak about his famous brother, potter Len Castle, and will also provide a video. **Trevor Pollard** will present on the restoration of the Chapel of Faith in the Oaks at Waikumete Cemetery.

### ***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 January meeting is **Friday, January 9th**.