



West Auckland Men's Rebus Club Newsletter

January 2026

Next meeting: 10:00 am Friday, 9th January, Friendship Hall, 3063 Great North Rd, New Lynn

COMMITTEE

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Laurie Vincent (316) strides out during the 1963 Auckland 10-mile Road Championship. To his left, [Jeff Julian](#) runs in the middle of the trio, with [Bill Baillie](#) the outermost runner on the road (in the front row). [Ivan Keats](#) (104) is on the footpath. Baillie went on to win the race; Julian finished second, and Laurie placed eighth.

MEETING REPORT

Friday 12th December 2025

Chairman: Bill Mutch

Attendance: 24 members and 1 visitor

Members: Bobby Bland, Neil Castle, John Corban, Stephen David, Mensto De Roos, Maurice Forbes, Robert King, John McKeown, Vince Middeldorp, John Mihaljevic, Eddie Molloy, Bill Mutch, Andrew Narayan, Trevor Pollard, Paul Robertson, Owen Schultz, Ian Smith, Mike Turnwald, Alan Verry, Laurie Vincent, Ken Watson, Ken Webster, Allan Williamson, Garrick Yearsley. Visitor: Doug Pollard.

1. Welcome and Introductions

The President opened the meeting at 10:00 am and welcomed members to the summer gathering. Sound system was confirmed to be working well.

2. Visitors

One visitor was present: Doug, son of member Trevor Pollard.
No other visitors recorded.

3. Apologies

Apologies received from Charles Nichols, Lyndsay Parris, Bill Fairs (recovering from a fall), Noel Rose (attending an event with his wife), Raymond Barrett (still preparing his house for the move to Pinesong).



Members back at the tables after morning tea. Left to right around the table are Ian Smith, Andrew Narayan, Doug Pollard, Alan Verry, Bill Mutch, Robert King, Mike Turnwald, Trevor Pollard, and Bobby Bland. Across on the right are Mensto De Roos (striped shirt) and in front of him Garrick Yearsley (looking at his phone).

4. Correspondence

The Secretary reported on several items:

- **Letter from Tina Bedggood**
Tina had shared our club story and newsletter with her mother in Canada, who “absolutely loved it.” Tina also assisted in correcting names and African terms in a story prepared for the newsletter.
- **Letter from “Caring Stay”**
An organisation offering paid support companions for medical appointments (\$60/hour). Noted for information only.
- **Community Grant**
The club has received a \$700 grant from the Council for 2026 operating expenses. This was the first time the Council proactively invited an application.
- **Rebus NZ Report**
The national Rebus organisation is planning a promotional campaign across New Zealand, which may generate new membership enquiries.

Other minor correspondence items were received but not discussed.

5. Treasurer's Report

- Current surplus for the year: \$156.50.
- Running costs remain \$90 per month.
- The Secretary suggested transferring some funds from the current account to savings to avoid appearing over-resourced when applying for future grants.
- A suggestion was made to label the savings account with a purpose to strengthen future applications.

6. Outings and Activities

6.1 Christmas Function Feedback

Ian Smith commented on the newsletter's report of the Christmas outing.

- He noted several complaints in the write-up but personally found the meal enjoyable.
- Clarified the correct pricing: \$55 including bus (meal alone was \$45).
- Light-hearted comments were made about broccoli and "weak jaws."

6.2 Coffee Mornings

- Next coffee morning: 28 January at Sierra.
- The recent visit to the Coffee Studio was very successful, and a return visit is likely.

6.3 Kaipara Harbour Cruise (January)

Alan Verry reported:

- A combined coach and four-hour cruise from **Pahi** to the **Ranganui Rail Bridge** is planned for **Tuesday 13 January**.
- Cost: \$79 per person.
- Payment required by 13 January to secure the booking.

Members were encouraged to register interest promptly.

6.4 Anniversary Weekend Tugboat Race

- Alan is investigating pricing for a trip aboard the William C Daldy during the tugboat race on 26 January.
- Names of interested members are being collected.

6.5 Christmas Lights Tour

- The Christmas Lights outing is fully booked (18 participants).
- A minibus has been arranged.

6.6 Christmas Wonderland

- Members were reminded of the Christmas Wonderland display at Glen Eden, where Alan is exhibiting his Christmas trains.

6.7 Ranganui Rail Bridge Anecdote

Bill shared a humorous railway story about the bridge's moving piles and the unnerving experience of crossing it by locomotive.

7. Speakers

- No external speaker is arranged for January.
- The meeting will feature club speakers.

8. General Business

No general business was raised.

9. Next Meeting

Friday 9 January 2026, same time and venue.

Claudia's Corner

What happened to the snail who lost his shell?
He became very sluggish!

What do you do to make a Glow-worm happy?
Cut off its tail and it will be delighted!

What's a snake's favourite opera?
Wriggletto.

What do you get if you pour boiling hot water down a rabbit hole?
Some hot cross bunnies!

What's the maximum sentence for Bigamy?
Two mother-in-laws.

Why do bees hum?
Because they forgot the words.

Diner: Can I have a crocodile sandwich and make it snappy.

First man: Did you know my dogs got no nose

Second man: How does he smell?

First man: Terrible

Enjoy the meeting--Claudia.



WELCOME TO 2026: RENEWAL, GROWTH & MOVING FORWARD

President's Report – January 2026

By Bill Mutch

Welcome back everyone to our first meeting of 2026!

I'm pleased to report that our club membership remains strong. We've welcomed several new members over recent months and haven't lost any existing members – a testament to the value and fellowship our club provides.

Our December meeting was a highlight, with two members delivering excellent presentations that were both informative and engaging. Unfortunately, time constraints meant Trevor Pollard couldn't present as planned. Trevor will now speak at this month's meeting, and going forward we'll limit presentations to two speakers per meeting to ensure everyone has adequate time without feeling rushed.

I want to assure members that we'll continue to allow 30 minutes for morning tea. This social time is vital to our club's friendly atmosphere and allows our kitchen team sufficient time for setup and cleanup.

At Friday's meeting, Vince will present first, followed by Trevor.

Regarding our Christmas lunch at McHughs, I've received some feedback worth considering. While the venue remains a favourite, a number of members — and even a few guests from outside the club — felt the food didn't quite match the standard we've enjoyed in previous years. This is valuable feedback that we'll keep in mind when planning our mid-winter and Christmas lunches going forward.

Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Bill Mutch
President

A LIFE ON THE RUN: MEMORIES OF LYDIARD, HEROES, AND FRIENDS

By Laurie Vincent



Our December 2025 speakers: Laurie Vincent (standing) and Neil Castle (seated).

It all started in the dark of a cinema in 1948. I was ten years old, sitting with friends at the local theatre in Devonport, watching the film of the 1948 London Olympic Games. I didn't know it then, but the final feature of that movie—the marathon—would change the course of my life.

I watched, mesmerized, as the drama unfolded. The film showed the Belgian runner, Etienne Gailly, leading the pack. He was a paratrooper who had fought to liberate his country, and he ran with a promise to win or die trying. As they entered the stadium, Gailly was exhausted, his legs barely obeying him. He was passed in those final heartbreaking moments by the Argentine Delfo Cabrera and Britain's Tom Richards, eventually stumbling home for bronze. Seeing that sheer grit, I was hooked. It was raining when we left the theatre, but I didn't take the bus. I ran the three kilometers home to Belmont. While I was running, I remember thinking to myself, "I'm doing the marathon!" That simple act sparked my lifelong interest in the sport.

The secondary school I went to was Takapuna Grammar School. While there I ran second in the Secondary School's Mile at Eden Park and ninth in the Secondary Schools Cross Country Championship at the Auckland Domain. The fourth placed runner in that race was Peter Snell.

I eventually landed at the "University" of running here in Auckland: the Owairaka Athletic Club. It was there I fell under the spell of the great Arthur Lydiard. In 1960, the Rome Olympics brought huge attention to New Zealand athletics, with the Arthur Lydiard coached runner Peter Snell unexpectedly winning the 800m, followed an hour later by another Arthur Lydiard coached runner, Murray Halberg, winning the 5000m.

Arthur Lydiard was a man ahead of his time. He told us we had to run 100 miles a week to build our endurance so that speed could be maintained. He taught us to run aerobically, meaning we kept our pulse rate steady and could hold a conversation while running, just as I'm talking to you now.

Some athletes managed the full 100 miles, but I typically trained at 60 to 70 miles a week. It kept me feeling fresh for races, while others who pushed too hard sometimes arrived at the start line tired.

The Lydiard influence was enormous: running clubs sprang up all over Auckland, fun runs became hugely popular, and events attracted crowds of 18,000 people.



On Sunday mornings we'd train in the Waitakere Ranges, running 35 kilometers with some of the best in the world training alongside us. I remember Murray Halberg and Peter Snell. There was Bill Baillie and Jeff Julian. These men were giants. I also recall Neville Scott, an Olympian who fought a terrible battle with alcoholism.

We have had our tragedies in the athletics fraternity. I often think of Doreen Lumley and her twin sister, Bernice. Doreen was a magnificent sprinter who had equalled a world record in 1939. She had raced against the great Australian champion Decima Norman. But their lives were cut short in a horrific car accident just months later. Two young girls, invited for a ride in a car that collided with a cream truck on the Pakuranga Highway. Both were killed. It is a stark reminder of the fragility of life.

Then there are the athletes who crossed codes. I remember a young woman, Jacinta Coleman. She started as a runner but, after some poor coaching burned her out with long, slow distance, she switched to cycling. She was brilliant, representing New Zealand at the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur and the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Tragically, she passed away in 2017 from bowel cancer, far too young.

Looking back through my collection of photos, I remember the camaraderie of the "boys" running the Waiatarua circuit. The photos also bring back memories from my coaching days. One of the runners I coached, Patrick Casey, has gone on to earn his PhD from the University of California, Davis.

Towards the end of his life, Arthur Lydiard may have remarked that he was going to America to die because only they truly appreciated him. Yet the turnout for his memorial at the Town Hall—the second-largest crowd I've ever witnessed—showed beyond doubt that his legacy here remains deeply cherished.

His influence reminds us that running has always offered more than fitness alone; it has given us a community, a shared history, and stories that endure long after the runners themselves have crossed their final finish line.

REMEMBERING LEN CASTLE: A BROTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

As told by Neil Castle

I've been thinking about my brother Len a lot lately, particularly as I watch footage from towards the end of his life. The images show him in one of his various homes—he moved around quite a bit in his later years.

He'd sold that magnificent house further down the road, near the rainforest. For years, everyone knew it as the Castle House. It changed hands several times over the decades, but came to a rather dramatic end two or three years ago when a massive landslide struck the area. A large portion of the section slid down into the valley, coming within just five feet of the house itself. I'm not even sure if anyone still lives there now.

The Art of Making

Watching the old footage, I'm struck by the scale of Len's work. On the right-hand side of one frame, you can see a large glass mold he's working with. He had this enormous sheet of clay that he'd place inside and pour into the mold. Until very recently, I'd assumed some of these massive bowls were simply thrown on the wheel, but apparently not. He did much of the shaping inside molds like that one. Some of his larger pieces were actually made in two sections and then joined together—you can see him working through that process in some of the footage.



Len Castle at his Titirangi home: seated in his library and shaping a large piece of pottery in his workshop.

His blossom jars were particularly striking—some stood this high, and commanded serious prices. I remember some fetching around \$13,000. Ron Sang, a devoted patron of the arts and wonderfully supportive man, owned several of these pieces. He'd published a book some years back with absolutely magnificent photographs. I remember one particular blossom jar—I think it was the one Ron had at the time of Len's funeral. I took it from the funeral home and placed a large cherry blossom branch beside it, one I'd pinched from up the road. It made for a really wonderful display.

From Earthenware to Stone

That image there shows one of Len's earthenware pieces—what he used to call his "salt bowls," because of the glazing technique. Earthenware is quite delicate, easily damaged. But most of Len's other work was stoneware, fired at such high temperatures that the clay literally turns back to stone.

There's one piece in particular that takes my breath away—absolutely magnificent, though I can't recall seeing it before. From certain angles, there's an eagle with remarkably spectacular, piercing eyes. Len was quite taken with the eagles at the Western Springs zoo where we used to visit. The eagles would sit in their

cage, and you'd wonder what they were looking at—they'd just gaze off into the distance constantly. Len managed to capture that effect perfectly. When you look at the piece from the side, you find yourself asking the same question: what is that bird looking at? That subtle glazing work—that's what he drew upon, the techniques he developed observing the world around him.

The Early Years and the Crum Brickwork's Period

The Len Castle Estate Collection that came to auction after Len's passing, organised by my wife Fay and myself, represented probably the most comprehensive offering of Len's work to ever come to market. The pieces ranged from his very beginning—the Crum Brickworks from the 1950s—right through his entire career, including the salt-glazed pieces and other techniques he developed.

What's particularly special is the inclusion of so many early pieces, ones that are referenced in both books about Len's work. These pieces from his brickworks period are among my favourites. One of the best stories from this era involves how Len would take his pieces down to the Crum brickworks in a bag, along with a couple of bottles of wine. He'd offer the wine to the workers at the kilns, and in return, they'd fire his pieces. It's a lovely anecdote that captures something essential about Len's approach—his generosity and his practical ingenuity. These early pieces are becoming increasingly rare, so it's wonderful to see such a collection.

The Rock Pool Bowl and Natural Inspiration

One piece that was apparently among Len's own favourites is a unique rock pool bowl from much later in his career. It features this barely-there bottom with blue tones and a cracking surface around the exterior—a beautiful example of his mature technique.

Part of the estate collection included something quite unusual: two collections of stones, rocks, and fossils that Len found on his various walks. These pieces were deeply inspirational for his practice, and you can clearly see their influence on his fossil series. The auction featured probably the most extensive offering of fossil forms ever in a single sale—no fewer than fifteen pieces. Seeing them alongside the actual stones and fossils that inspired them, you can appreciate how incredibly he rendered these natural forms in clay.

Learning the Craft

Len himself spoke about his journey into pottery. His first experiences with clay came at Auckland Teachers' College with Hilary Clark, and later with Robert Nettleton Field at Avondale College. Both teachers communicated not just their skills but their genuine enthusiasm for working with clay. They taught him to see, taught him to explore.

Bernard Howell Leach was hugely influential—a man who allowed Len to develop a personal view, showing him that pots could express attitudes quite strongly and that pottery could become a way of life, not just a craft.

Raw Materials and Process

For many years, Len gathered his raw materials from a small local pit. The clay from that area was quite sandy, which he used to open up other clays that were too fine and fatty—a practical consideration that speaks to his deep understanding of materials.

Watching footage of his firing process is mesmerising. The glazes start to melt, clay pigments and glazes react with the reducing atmosphere to produce special colour effects. Temperature cones are checked carefully. When top temperature is reached, there's a crucial 30-minute period of soaking the kiln at that temperature. It's a technical process, but also something almost alchemical—watching earth transform into stone, watching Len's vision take permanent form.

A Lasting Connection

There's also a wonderful collection of large format slides by Theo Schoon that were part of the estate. Len wrote about these in February 2007, explaining that Theo had gifted them to him around 1983. Most of the images were taken during the 1950s and 60s, primarily at the Rotorua and Wairakei geothermal zones. Some show intimate aspects of the New Zealand landscape—abstract patterns of great beauty.



Len Castle's Large Bird Head Ceramic Bowl – Iconic NZ Art, Truly Stunning

Buy Now
\$8,500

Buy Now

Add to Cart

Starting price
\$8,500

Place bid

No reserve
No bids

Len Castle's ceramics remain in high demand, with collectors paying significant sums for his finest works.

The relationship between Theo and Len was significant and collaborative. I remember when Len visited Art+Object early in their establishment and gave them a superb set of tiles that featured Theo Schoon's impressed designs—quite a collaborative process between the two artists. That initial piece sold for \$6,960. Len had helped Art+Object when they first started by selling work through them without taking any commission at all. That gesture helped establish them, and they treated Len very well in return. It was typical of Len—generous, supportive, focused on building something larger than himself.

Len Castle was, without question, one of New Zealand's leading potters. His work had a unique and distinctive style that brought recognition from overseas as well as from his own country. But more than that, he was my brother—someone who saw beauty in river stones and eagle eyes, who understood that clay could carry meaning, and who built a life around that understanding. Watching these old films, seeing his hands shape clay in those enormous molds, I'm reminded of what mattered most to him: the work itself, the slow transformation of earth into art, and the generous spirit he brought to everything he touched.

A MEMORABLE EVENING AT CHAPEL OF FAITH IN THE OAKS

By Laurie Vincent

The evening of Sunday, December 14th, saw a wonderful gathering at the Chapel of Faith In The Oaks, featuring a diverse program of musical performances that delighted all in attendance, including members of the West Auckland Men's Rebus Club.

The evening opened with a moving bagpipe performance by Andrew Wilkie, who played a piece he composed in honour of his late father. The Glen Eden Methodist Choir then set a festive tone with several carols, followed by an accomplished trio of Paula Scandel (violin), Evelyn Boyack (viola), and Antonina Marriott (cello) performing "Sweet Pea."

Christine Treseder-Hallett and Rebecca Scott delivered two beautiful duets accompanied by Judy King on piano. Their selections reached back through the centuries, with the sixteenth-century "Ding Dong Merrily on High" and Pietro Yon's "Gesù Bambino." Rebecca Scott then performed Franz Schubert's beloved "Ave Maria," again with Judy King providing sensitive piano accompaniment.

Peter Palmer's keyboard solos were warmly received by the audience, followed by Marina and Katie Scott's stirring rendition of "There's a Place For Us" from West Side Story.

The event, organised once again by Trevor Pollard who has coordinated this annual tradition for several years, drew club members Mary & Laurie Vincent, Ewen Clark, Paul Robertson, Bob King, Alan Verry, Maurice and Jan Forbes, Andrew & Linda Narayan, Janet Geddes, and John McKeown.

The Glen Eden Methodist Choir brought the evening to a rousing close with an exuberant performance of "Feliz Navidad," led by their energetic and infectious conductor Ivan Fuimaono, whose enthusiasm captivated everyone present.



Paula Scandel (violin), Evelyn Boyack (viola), and Antonina Marriott (cello) with MC Simon Grant looking on.

NEXT COFFEE MORNING

Ian Smith has let us know that our next coffee morning is scheduled for Wednesday, **January 28th, 2026**, at Sierra Café. He also reports that the Waitakere Combined Rebus Club committee will meet on January 14th to map out trips and activities for the coming months.

For those who haven't visited Sierra Café before, it's located at the **Lincoln Centre**, the shopping complex at 111/115 Lincoln Road. The centre is home to several large retailers, including **The Warehouse, Spotlight, Stationery Warehouse, and Noel Leeming.**

SPEAKERS FOR JANUARY MEETING

We have two club speakers lined up for the 11:00 am to 12:00 pm slot on Friday, January 9th, 2026. **Vince Middeldorp** will give a talk on Lyndon Baines Johnson, the most corrupt President in American history. **Trevor Pollard**, recently honoured with life membership of the West Auckland Historical Society in recognition of his dedication to local history, will present on an aspect of West Auckland's rich heritage.

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 February meeting is **Friday, February 13th.**