

# Donkey Serenade

Newsletter No 22

November, 2017

Greetings and a very happy Christmas time to you and yours from the Donkeys and the Society who cares for them.

Our Christmas function **Saturday 9th December 2017** and begins at **11:00am**. We hope you will come along with your neighbours. We begin our festivities with children's racing, the usual old fashioned fun. This will be followed by a Sausage Sizzle, courtesy of Auckland Council. Santa and the Donkey Parade will arrive at 1.15pm with Christmas singing and a lolly scramble. Its thanks to our Tuesday Working Bees that Council in turn provide us with the BBQ and Plus... As well we have donkey rides etc ongoing. Our thanks to everyone who comes and helps us. Please note:

*ANY INCLEMENT WEATHER AND OUR CHRISTMAS FUNCTION IS CANCELLED.*



## **...The Bray** .....Donkey Manager: *Peter Caccia-Birch*

All donkeys are fit and well, and have come through a very wet winter in fine fettle. Forty five bales of hay were fed out, plus a small ration of hard feed to Tanzy.

Only one foot abscess was treated during this time. Our Farrier Frans, has just trimmed all hooves and reports all in good order.

We are very fortunate to have Patty join our Donkey team, aka "the Jockey". Under her guidance we have now four donkeys that we can give rides on to children.

Our many thanks again to Maxine and Gill who tirelessly turn up every Tuesday morning to groom and clean out the donkeys hooves, this is why they all look so good.

We have purchased two new bareback pads and altered an existing one for the comfort of riders.



Many thanks to our membership, especially those who have renewed their subscription.

If your \$10 per household has been overlooked please pay:

Direct Credit ASB 12 3095 0254516 00 or

Membership Secretary, Highfield Donkeys Inc:

483 Mahurangi East Road, Snells Beach.

For your interest, our Membership List has 166 names on it, 55 are financial.

Then of course there are those talented community members who help with the Donkeys and with the Park.

The photograph opposite shows members working on the new Lily Pond Track, this 10 year project is well underway.

We are fortunate that when we have a need, our Community and the Council step in and help out.

An excerpt from a book called 'Wine and War' that Sheila and Allan Ford enjoyed and wish to share with us all. Well you may ask what have wine and donkeys got to do with each other....read on.....

....That life was one of legend and myth, a life which, in many ways, had changed little since the Middle Ages. 'It was a simpler time in the vineyards,' Maurice's son Robert recalled years later. 'We had a way of living, a way of making wine that was natural and *tres ancienne*.'

It was made the way their grandfathers and great-grandfathers had made it. There were no experts to rely on, so everyone followed the traditions they knew and had grown up with. Plowing was done with horses. Planting, picking and pruning were done according to the phases of the moon. Older people often reminded younger ones that the merits of pruning were discovered when St Martin's donkey got loose in the vineyards.

It happened, they said, in 345 A.D when St Martin, dressed in animal skins and riding on a donkey, went out to inspect some of the vineyards that belonged to his monastery near Tours in the Loire Valley. He was a lover of wine and had done much over the years to educate monks about the latest viticultural practices. On this occasion, St Martin tethered his donkey to a row of vines while he went about his business. He was gone for several hours. When he returned, he discovered to his horror that his donkey had been munching on the vines and that some had been chewed right down to the trunk. Next year, however, the monks were surprised when they saw that those same vines were the very ones which grew back the most abundantly and produced the best grapes. The lesson was not lost on the monks, and as the centuries passed, pruning became part of every winegrower's routine..And there we are, its thanks to donkeys, that we can now centuries later enjoy wines made from the indiscretions of donkeys.....

And from Peter Caccia-Birch, who says in a note from the Advisory Team at Highfield Garden Reserve.

"The Power of the Wolf is the Pack"

Over eighty volunteer hours have been put into the Orchard area over the November month, by Allen,John,Bryan,Ken,Don,Daniel and Leigh.

Some work completed includes: Small foot bridge installed,carpet squares laid around new native trees, guava and codlin moth traps set, weeding, spraying, mulching, stoat and rat traps set.

I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year,and thank all the willing volunteers who have contributed to make Highfield this wonderful gem.

Special thanks to Sinead, our Volunteer Park Ranger, who has gone beyond the call of duty.....

And lastly from *Tansy, Tina, Toby, Truffle, Tara, Topsy & Turvey*, as always, enjoy the park and all the animals. Report any problems you may find, don't over feed us and remember to shut the gates. Till next time...

**Shona Duncan**

