

DONKEY SERENADE

Vol 36. February 2022 | Highfield Donkeys Incorporated Society Newsletter



Auckland Parks Donkey Day at Highfield Reserve Cancelled

Unfortunately for the 2nd year running, the Donkey Day, which was due to be held early March 2022, has had to be cancelled.

The Executive Committee have decided that it would be impractical to have a limit of 100 people at an event, to ensure that everyone had a vaccine passport, 1 meter spacing and mask checks. The annual Parks in Auckland week is being held from 5th to 15th of March. They have decided to focus on December's event and have fingers crossed that will go ahead after the disappointment of cancelling the 2021's events.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Huge thank you to Mick Saunders for sourcing 32 bales of hay (including 10 donated) and keeping our stocks topped up for the winter ahead.

A big welcome to Steve Lukatina, our new Committee Member for the Highfield Garden Reserve Advisory Committee. Steve started off in horticulture then became an arborist at Napier Botanical Gardens. During his time with Auckland Council, he felled the wilding pines here at Highfield and now has oversight of the Highfield orchard.



For all the latest news and up to date information, please follow us at: facebook.com/donkeyshighfield

Volunteer Focus:

Peter Caccia-Birch

QSM, Dip Ag.

Peter is one of our founding members of the Highfield Donkey Inc and currently volunteering as the Operations Manager. Without his dedication to the Highfield Donkeys and the Highfield Reserve Advisory Committee, and his friendship with Alison Roberts, the wonderful herd of donkeys and the Highfield Reserve may never have happened.

Peter was born in Wellington, but went to College in Christchurch. Upon leaving school, his father, a Senior Manager for the NZ State Forest Service, asked him if he wanted to go into forestry or livestock management. Peter, who had spent many holidays on his uncle's farms in the Rangitikei area decided on livestock management. He moved to Southland as a farm cadet on an intensive sheep farm. He then attended Massey Agricultural College in 1960 & 1961 achieving the Diploma in Agriculture.

After graduating he managed a hill country farm at Te Akau, joining the local Rugby team as a half back and married Val with whom he had two children. Peter and the family then moved to Matawai where he managed Romney & Hereford studs on the 860ha Rahui Station.

His next role was working for AFFCO, near Wellsford, managing a 550ha hill country farm. This area was designated to be a freezing works site but after 10 years this project did not take off and the farm was sold. Peter's next role was to manage a dairy farm at Te Hana. He then went to the South Island for six months to help his nephew set up a dairy farm in Hinds in South Canterbury.

In 1991 Peter & Val bought a house in Fidelis Avenue in Snells Beach and regularly walked through Highfield Reserve, which had been purchased by the Rodney District Council (RDC) in the 1980s. While walking through the Reserve he began talking to Alison Roberts, who was over the fence with her donkeys – RDC set up an Advisory Committee in 2002 to give advice on the Highfield Reserve, as they did with several other parks in Rodney. These were set up to



Peter Caccia-Birch at home in Snells Beach.

"Peter, for the last 22 years, has spent nearly every day ensuring that the Donkeys are well cared for, managing mating, pregnancies, illnesses and diseases."

encourage people to take an interest in the local community reserves. Peter put his name forward to be on this committee and was duly elected.

In 2009 Alison died, and it had always been her husband Ted's wish, that the land and the donkeys were given back to New Zealand. An Incorporated Society was formed with the blessing of Alison's family to manage the donkeys. A full committee was set up and Peter volunteered to be the Donkey Manager.

Peter, for the last 22 years, has spent nearly every day ensuring that the Donkeys are well cared for, managing mating, pregnancies, illnesses and diseases. His role has also been that of managing the volunteers and liaising with the Auckland Council's Park Ranger to ensure that the grounds are developed and the original orchard maintained and enhanced as part of his role with the Advisory Committee. **Cont. on page 3**

Volunteer Focus Cont.

Peter's community contribution in this area was not just restricted to the Highfield Reserve, but he was also instrumental along with others, in starting the Te Whau Esplanade walkway from the Goodall Reserve to Dawsons Road. He has also served on the Snells Beach Ratepayers and Residents Committee.

His contribution to the community was recognised this New Year by being awarded the Queens Service Medal. On learning the news of his award he was very humbled and wanted it known that there are many other people in the community who also have contributed to Highfield Garden Reserve.



Peter with some of the volunteers up at Highfield Garden Reserve.

Snells Beach Rox Project

You may have noticed rocks painted with DONKEY on them hidden around the Highfield Reserve.

For 2 years, a project for younger people has been running in Snells beach. The idea was to enable children to explore the area and discover painted rocks. This idea of Jenny Bartlett, was to hide the rocks and then let children hunt for them and parents could take a picture and rehide them. A sort of Pokemon with rocks and it enabled children to get out of the house and away from the screens.

By the time they were able to be photographed, they had all disappeared from the reserve but here is a photograph of some of the original ones.



Painted rocks make for a fun scavenger hunt in Snells Beach.

LAMINITAS IN DONKEYS

Laminitis is inflammation of the 'laminae', the sensitive soft tissue structure inside the hoof that joins the pedal bone to the hoof wall. As a result, the pedal bone loses its support and becomes unstable. The bone can rotate or move downwards within the hoof, causing pain and irreversible damage.

What causes laminitis?

Possible causes, and there are many, are access to too much grass, and access to cereal or other sugar rich feed.

What are the signs of laminitis?

Lameness indicates pain in a limb. Never leave a lame donkey until tomorrow. If you suspect laminitis, the vet should be called immediately.

How should laminitis be treated?

Treatment could include sole supports, dietary management, and restricted exercise. The donkey may need pain killers and the vet may order an x-ray which can also be a guide to the farrier.

Source: abridged - Donkey Despatch September 2021, Vol 48 No 3.