

# DONKEY SERENADE

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Liz & Jane at the Highfield Donkeys Inc. stall.

## Joining in the Snells Beach Community Night fun!

**The Snells Beach Community Night was held on the evening of Friday 11th August and was a roaring success, attended by thousands of local residents. The venue for the event was the old Warehouse building, which is currently vacant and was perfect for a big community event.**

The idea behind the night was to bring together and connect the community, showcasing the vast range of clubs, activities and groups in the area. Over 40 stallholders were in attendance, with something for everyone from kids to seniors. The carpark was abuzz with a fire truck, police car, rock climbing wall and food trucks.

Highfield Donkeys Inc. naturally jumped at the chance to have a stall. Our table was well positioned to catch people as they began their meanders, with the banner, donkey head and pest control maps on display. Liz was on duty for the membership, enrolling 15 new members and one renewal. Maxine charmed the passers by and drew them to the table.

Peter was the face of Highfield that everyone recognised and raised \$40 from selling one cap. Jane touted the Christmas cards and tags and promoted the upcoming Donkey Santa Day.

Maxine kindly donated 2 Wonky Donkey books that were raffled to the new members, who loved them.

The team behind the event is called the Kowau Bay Action Group and they work closely with the Snells Beach Residents & Ratepayers Association (SBRRA). Main organizer Kathy Toon was quoted in the Local Matters as being "blown away by the response to the Friday night event". Hopefully these kind of community events will be held regularly in the future as judging by the number of people that came along, it's a great initiative that locals are eager to get involved with.

### Save the Date!

Donkey Santa Day will be held this year on Saturday 9th December.



## Volunteers Morning Tea

Our Volunteers Morning tea was held on Tuesday 20th June, to celebrate National Volunteer Week - and Donkey Groomer Gill's birthday! It was a lovely chance for everyone who volunteers their time to Highfield, to get together and share some yummy food, hot drinks and conversation.



## AGM Recap

The 2023 AGM was held on Tuesday 1st August at 4pm in the Betty Paxton Room, Mahurangi East Community Centre, Snells Beach. Everything ran smoothly with a really good turnout. The Committee was re-elected with unanimous support.

A big thank you to Ox Wightman for an inspiring talk on the life of a volunteer that brings together whanau, work, schools and the community.



## The Origins of the Highfield Donkeys

**Highfield's donkeys are descendants of the donkeys imported from Australia by Frederick Chamberlin. The following is a brief history:**

Frederick Chamberlin was born in England in 1826. He emigrated to New Zealand and as a 27yr old, purchased Ponui Island (in the Hauraki Gulf) from the New Zealand Government in 1854 for 100 Pds.

Frederick and his brother Charles spent their early years on Ponui Island establishing vegetable gardens, an orchard and farming sheep and cattle.

In the 1880's, 3 Donkeys were brought to the island together with other livestock from New South Wales. The donkeys bred, establishing a feral herd which has since been registered by the Donkey & Mule Society of New Zealand and is listed as "rare" by the Rare Breeds Conservation Society of New Zealand.

The donkeys were used to transport materials around the island plus donkey rides were offered to the holiday makers staying at the cottages available for rent.

The characteristics of the Ponui Island donkey are: docile and sturdy, standing about 1 metre at the withers and usually a light dun colour but may be chocolate.



## Highfield Donkey Story Book

A team of locals, led by Fleur Coleman from the Mahurangi East Library in Snells Beach, is developing a children's story book about the Donkeys at Highfield. These will be written by Jenny van der Mespel whose grandma Alison Roberts gifted Highfield Garden Reserve to the people.

The target audience will be ages 5 (parent read to) to 9 (read themselves).

We hope the book will be available in time for Christmas.







## Additions to the Orchard

A new nesting box has been erected in the Highfield orchard by volunteers, Brian McGrath (pictured) and Peter Caccia-Birch. The box was made superbly by another of our diligent volunteers and life member, Allan Ford. It is the replacement of one that had gone past its use-by date and originally from Peter Couling's farm. Peter, now deceased, was our past lovable Chairman who spent many memorable hours in the aid and progress of the Donkeys and Highfield Reserve.

In addition to the nesting box, a new feijoa tree has been planted by Brian. The original one was Council planted in September 2011, but was unfortunately blown over in the January 2023 storms. Brian is one of our original and supreme volunteers who has dedicated many hours to Highfield over the years.



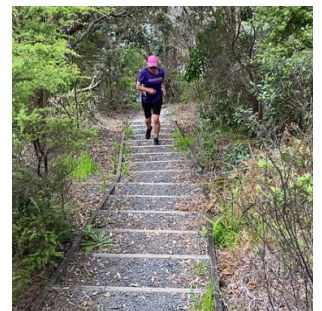
Brian planting a new feijoa tree and (at the top) up in the trees, erecting a new nesting box.



**When Personal Trainer Evana Corric moved to Snells Beach a year ago, she soon discovered Highfield Garden Reserve and not only the beautiful lookout from the top carpark, but the 'hidden stairway to heaven'.**

Evana works at the Fitness Hub Gym in Snells Beach and she started doing sets of the 'Donkey Park' stairs during her January 8 Week Challenge. From the top, down to the lookout platform, is approximately 220 steps. Starting off with walking 3 sets, by the end of the challenge, this had increased by one a week to 10 sets, including a few running sets and the remainder walking.

When the challenge finished, several of the challenge participants decided to continue with the weekly 'Donkey Park' stairs meet up on a Friday afternoon, weather permitting.



Evana tackling the stairs.

"What I love about the stairs, from a fitness perspective, is that, no matter what level of fitness you are, you can give them a go and everyone is there to not only push themselves but to encourage the others as well. And, age is merely a number.. we've had our 4 year old kids following us and older challenge members join us, at 68 years old." says Evana.

Whether you are interested in joining the upcoming 6 Week Spring/Summer Challenge (October 30th start), attending a few summer outdoor bootcamps at the Highfield Reserve or just want to meet up with a friendly bunch to do a couple of sets of stairs, feel free to get in touch! [evanacorrcoach@gmail.com](mailto:evanacorrcoach@gmail.com)

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL:** Memberships due for the 2023/2024 financial year can be paid by Direct Credit to: **ASB 12 3095 0254516 00**. Please include your **name** and **telephone number** in the reference details. Memberships are \$10 per household per year. **Your continuing support is much appreciated.**



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