



The new shelter will keep visitors to Highfield protected year-round.

New Picnic Shelter Stands Proud Thanks to Local Support

We're thrilled to share that the new shelter over the picnic table is now complete - a wonderful milestone made possible by the generosity and teamwork of our local community.

What began earlier this year as a fundraising project has come to life thanks to the hard work of local handyman Mark Becroft with assistance from Len Miller. The shelter now provides welcome protection from the sun and rain, ensuring the picnic area can be enjoyed year-round by visitors and volunteers alike.

Funding for the project was raised through generous community support, including donations from Sarah Howlett, Gay Bradbury, the Algies Bay Residents and Ratepayers, Mitre 10, and several private donors. We extend a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who contributed time, materials, and financial support to make this project possible.

To celebrate the completion of the shelter and acknowledge the volunteers who helped along the way, we'll be holding a Volunteers Pot Luck Dinner in November.

Meet the new Committee

Highfield Garden Reserve and Donkey Society Incorporated recently held its AGM on 18th August at 4pm at the Mahurangi East Bowling Clubrooms, Snells Beach.

Upon Election of Committee Members, Jane acknowledged the presence of Patron, Dave Parker. With Maxine Vitali and Liz Duhs stepping down from their roles and with the passing of Steve Luketina earlier this year, 3 vacancies were left. Nominations had been received for Christine Lamont, Alison Richardson and Mark Becroft. There were no further nominations from the floor. There was a unanimous acceptance of the Elected Committee.

Now to get to know our newly elected members...



Christine Lamont
Secretary

My husband, Pati, and I moved up from Te Atatū permanently six years ago, although we've been visiting regularly since 2006. We have three daughters and two wonderful grandchildren.

My career was in administration, and in 2023, I took early retirement - though I've never been busier! I love spending time with my grandchildren, reading, knitting, doing Pilates, and going on walks with our dogs.

I'm currently the Secretary for the Salty Dog Social Club in Snells Beach, I bake for the charity Good Bitches Baking, and I've recently taken on the role of Secretary for the Highfield Garden Reserve & Donkey Society.

I was inspired to join the Highfield Committee after seeing the incredible work already being done. I attended the premiere of the Highfield movie and that inspired me further. When I saw the opening for the Secretary I jumped at the chance. It is also a lovely way to meet new people. Hopefully I can fill the large shoes that Maxine, the outgoing secretary has left.

My go to pot-luck dinner contribution would be chicken nibbles and a lemon brownie.



Alison Richardson
Membership

After living in Northwest Auckland for thirty years, my husband and I moved to Snells Beach last year for a change of lifestyle in our retirement. We enjoy the slower pace of life and the many activities we can be involved with in the wider area. Our two adult children live on the North Shore so are not far away.

I love animals so with the donkeys nearby I was keen to find a way to be involved with Highfield. I have past committee experience and strong organisational skills so when an opportunity came up to join the committee I offered my services.

As I learn more about the committee's activities, I hope to contribute new ideas and initiatives particularly around increasing membership and support.

I am enjoying learning about donkeys as I really didn't know much about them. It was lovely to spend time there recently, get introduced to each one and hear their individual stories and personalities.

I am a keen baker so generally opt to provide a dessert. A popular offering is my raspberry and white chocolate shortcake.



Mark Becroft
Park Supervisor

I began my career as an engineer before moving into restaurant and hospitality management. These days, I'm a handyman - I fix things.

Service has always been part of my family's story. I've been a Scout Leader and served on yacht club committees, helping others whenever I could. In the past six years, our family has grown with seven grandchildren, who always love feeding carrots to the donkeys when they visit. So when I heard the Highfield Committee needed help, I happily put my hand up.

Working alongside other volunteers, even just a few hours at a time, I hope to help preserve and improve this place for our community. The kauri and tōtara planted decades ago will one day tower above the bush, and the new native trees we're planting now will grow into a local forest for all to enjoy.

My wife and I were reminiscing recently about one of my mother's favourite potluck dishes - her asparagus pie. If fresh asparagus is still around for the Highfield potluck dinner I might give it a new twist - or maybe an asparagus quiche.



The Committee for 2025/26 is as follows:

Chair: Jane Kelsey

Election of Officers:

Secretary: Christine Lamont

Treasurer: Marion Jones

Election of Committee Members:

Member at Large: Peter Caccia-Birch

Family Representative: Jenny Van der Mespel

Membership: Alison Richardson

Communications: Lou Bartlett

Highfield Garden Reserve: Mark Becroft

Donkey Manager: Ox Wightman

Volunteer Co-Ordinator: Anne Hamilton

Truffle Gets a Very Special Birthday Invite

Truffle recently received a very special and exclusive invitation to a little girl's birthday party at Highfield. Birthday girl Anika reassured Truffle not to worry - she would be the generous recipient of plenty of carrots! We hope you all had a wonderful time together.



Even Donkeys Need a Manicure

Peter Caccia-Birch and Anne Hamilton recently accompanied our farrier Sonya King to trim Truffle and Ted's hooves. Ted, who is father to several of the herd, lives offsite and Truffle is currently there with him for a bit (*see below*).



Highfield Donkey Santa Fun Day



**11am-1.30 PM,
Saturday 6th
December 2025
483 Mahurangi East
Road, Algies Bay**

For more information, including cancellation for weather, please check our facebook page.

Truffle Update

Truffle has gone to spend time with Ted for another 'honeymoon.' She will be away until the New Year and miss Santa Fun Day. Sadly, her son Titan, born in December 2023, passed away following a routine operation. We remain hopeful that this union will once again bring a sister or brother for Toby and Tilly II, adding to our growing herd.

Donkey Tails Comes to Life!



Donkey Tails from Highfield has been a project long in the making, made possible by a generous anonymous donor. We're delighted to announce it's now complete and will be available for sale in the coming weeks - just in time for Christmas!

Written by Jenny Roberts and beautifully illustrated by Julianne Edwards, this charming children's storybook features our very own Peter Caccia-Birch and Truffle on the cover. Inside you will find four heartwarming tales inspired by real events at Highfield: *Off the Donkey's Back*, *Puddles*, *The Christmas Refusal*, and *Donkey Day*.

Books cost \$20 (+p&p) with all proceeds going to Highfield. We will be giving an update soon around the release date and how to order.

Lessons from the Donkey: Tradition, Care and the Spirit of Service

By Ox Wightman

Well we are less than two months out from Christmas and a month away from Santa Donkey Day.

History tells us the legend of Lokael is about the donkey who carried Jesus to Jerusalem, not the donkey that carried Mary to Bethlehem.

Whereas the idea of Mary riding a donkey comes from tradition and storytelling, not the biblical text.

The ox (not me) and the donkey have been part of Nativity scenes since early Christianity symbolizing peace, humility and servitude.

Since the arrival in November 1969 of our first donkey Tilly, all our donkey names have started with a "T" in acknowledgment of Ted Roberts whose inspiration they were. And why we are here today to carry such a legacy on.

Unlike some humans our donkeys have a reason for everything they do which is why we often hear them braying or displaying specific actions getting the attention they desire, such as when Peter, Anne or I come to feed or shift them.

Truffle and Tina are both daily recipients of pellet feeding to substantiate their diet and ensure their condition is maintained. The feeding of small amounts of hay is currently undertaken but will end once the warm weather and grass growth begins.

Toby, Tara, Topsy, Turvey and Tilly II have a natural self-cleaning ability. Their coarse outer hairs of their coat help repel dirt and water, keeping their skin dry. However, while they have a layer of natural oils that help moisturize their skin and provide some protection against parasites and bacterial infections the grooming



Donkeys on parade at the annual Highfield Donkey Santa Fun Day.

Our band of groomers will commence lead training for the donkeys leading up to this day to ensure we do not have reluctant participants on the day.

staff regularly check for such things as rain scald and irritating insects like flies requiring treatment where necessary.

The farrier arrived on Tuesday 7th October and this will ensure all hooves are in good condition leading into the summer months. Donkey Drenching along with Peter and Ann rotating the donkeys through the paddocks on a regular cycle ensures land-based feed is plentiful.

Visitor numbers continue to increase each weekend which augurs well for the Santa day on the 6th December. Our band of groomers will commence lead training for the donkeys leading up to this day to ensure we do not have reluctant participants on the day.

So be like a donkey, stop and assess each new situation and think about your choices before making a decision on what action to you intend to take.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: Memberships due for the 2025/2026 financial year can be paid by Direct Credit to:

Highfield Garden Reserve and Donkey Society Incorporated - **ASB 12 3095 0254516 00**. Please include your **name** and **telephone number** in the reference details. Memberships are \$10 per household per year. For any enquiries please contact Alison at: highfieldmembers@gmail.com **Your continuing support is much appreciated.**



www.highfelddonkeys.nz



thehighfelddonkeys@gmail.com



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