# DONKEY SERENADE

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*Editor - Lou Bartlett*





**From left to right, Community Vote Winners: Milly Hand, Ezekiel Swann and Nina Hassan.**

# Young Photographers Celebrate Highfield

**Twelve-year-old Nina Hassan has taken out the top prize in the inaugural Highfield Photography Story Competition, announced at a special prizegiving at Mahurangi East Library.**

The competition encouraged children and teenagers to explore Highfield Garden Reserve during the July school holidays, capturing their visit through photography and a short accompanying story. Entrants could submit up to four photographs, sharing their favourite moments and experiences at the reserve.

There were winners across three age groups, with both the community and a judging panel choosing their favourites. Congratulations to all the young photographers who took part. Due to it's success, we will be running this competition again next year.

**The results were:**

**Ages 6–8:** Ezekiel Swann won the community vote, with Jackson Neal receiving a Highly Commended award from the judging panel.

**Ages 9–12:** Nina Hassan won the community vote, with Georgia Hand Highly Commended.

**Ages 13–17:** Milly Hand won the community vote, with Agnes Biju Highly Commended.

As the overall competition winner, Nina received a $150 Noel Leeming voucher.

The winning entries were printed and framed by Photo Store Warkworth, while the Rodney Local Board generously provided $50 vouchers for each age-category winner, along with the overall prize.

***(See more photos on next page).***

## Cover story cont.

**Our young winners receiving their prizes...**




**Huge thanks to:**

## Hive of Activity

Our Tuesday working bees have been making great progress, with plenty of projects being ticked off the list, particularly in the front bush block area. A new bench has been installed, lots of planting has been done, and a new archway has been added for roses to grow up and over. Alongside repairs to the gates and other improvements, the front area is really starting to take shape and looking fantastic. A big thank you to all our volunteers who have been lending a hand!

## Alan Norton – A Lasting Legacy at Highfield



**In 2002 Rodney District Council invited local members to meet in the Betty Paxton Room in Snells Beach to approach interested persons to form an advisory committee for Highfield Garden Reserve.**

A committee was elected with Peter Caccia-Birch as chair and Alan Norton as Secretary/Treasurer, and four other members. This was known as the Highfield Garden Reserve Advisory Committee. Its role was to advise the Rodney District Council on what improvements could be made in the 10 acre Bush Block. Alan was very proactive in advocating planting specimen native trees and pest control. As a retired Trade Commissioner he was well versed in penning letters to Council!

When Alison Roberts, who gifted the reserve land, died in 2009 the Council asked "who owns the donkeys?" The family's next generation did not want the responsibility, so with their blessing Alan led and formed an Incorporated Society with Peter Couling as Chair, Alan as Secretary and Peter Caccia-Birch as Donkey Manager.

Alan prepared a Memorandum of Understanding which was duly signed on the rock in the orchard. He spent many thoughtful hours and led four meetings with Council officers about a license or lease for the donkeys on Council land. An agreement was reached after he sent a letter to the Minister of Conservation. As a result of all this work the MOU continues to govern the reserve and the donkeys and their successors have a perpetual right to graze.

Alan was made a Life Member at the AGM in 2022. We are very sad that he has gone but he has left a lasting memory of good works at Highfield.







RODNEY LOCAL BOARD / AUCKLAND COUNCIL

# HIGHFIELD DONKEY SANTA FUN DAY 11am-1.30pm, Sat 28th Nov



## SANTA, DONKEY RIDES, GAMES, BBQ, AND MORE

Join us on Donkey Day at Highfield Reserve for a fun day for the whole family. There will be Santa, donkey rides, traditional games, a free BBQ, and more!
WHEN: 11AM - 1.30 PM, Saturday 28th November 2026
WHERE: 483 Mahurangi East Road, Algies Bay 0920
Bring hats, refillable water bottles, smiles
For more information, including cancellation for weather, please check https://www.facebook.com/donkeyshighfield

# Ted Through an Artist's Eyes

Ted has been responsible for fathering a few members of our herd over the years. He lives offsite with Leo van de Wijdeven, who kindly shared this wonderful portrait of Ted, painted last year.



## Truffle

Visitors to Highfield may have noticed that Truffle is missing from the reserve. She has gone to spend some time with Ted for another 'holiday' and will be away until the new year. We're hopeful that this union will result in adding another member to our herd!

# Donkey Tails for Christmas!




Looking for a Christmas gift for the young ones in your family? Why not treat them to a Donkey Tails book! Purchase online at **highfielddonkeys.nz/shop** or pop along to our Highfield Donkey Santa Fun Day on the 28th November to grab your copy.

# Meet Dan Marrow: Our Community Park Ranger

***Kia ora tātou.***
***Nō Ingarangi ahau.***
***Nō Īnia (India), nō Āwherika (Afrika), nō Airangi (Ireland), nō Ingarangi (England) hoki aku tūpuna.***
***Kei Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau ahau e mahi ana.***
***(I work at/in Auckland Council).***
***He Kaitiaki Papa Rēhia ā-Hapori ahau.***
***(I'm a Community Park Ranger).***
***Ko Dan taku ingoa.***

I grew up in UK and lived in some extraordinary places, including Orkney Isles where my dad set up a Ferry service. They were very formative years and led to my respect, love and awe of nature and ecology. I suspect the wide open spaces and connection to nature are the main drivers that has led me to settle in Aotearoa for 24 years now.

From an early age I wanted to contribute to environmental protection and went to University in Newcastle to study Environmental Management. In the early 90's there wasn't much work in that field so did a few years of labouring and menial jobs to save money and go backpacking, eventually ending up in NZ in 2002. Warkworth is definitely home and I'm proud to have raised two excellent children, Rama (18) and Shanti (16).

I'm grateful to be of service in Rodney and Hibiscus Bays as a Community Park Ranger as it allows me to practice my passion for restoring nature and supporting/working with similar minded people. My job exists because Council and Local boards recognise the value of caring volunteers. You guys rock!!



**From left to right: Dan Marrow joining in the fun with Mike Reilly and Peter Caccia-Birch at Highfield Donkey Santa Fun Day last year.**

www.highfielddonkeys.nz facebook.com/donkeyshighfield