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Established in 1996 especially for Pakuranga, Howick and Botany residents

NEWS

DECEMBER 2025



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DECEMBER HELP DAYS

Tues 2nd 10am
Wed 10th 10am

No appointment necessary


Knock, knock!
 Who's there?
Murray.
 Murray who?
Murray Christmas
to you!

Our next Meeting,

**Friday
5th December**

at 10.00am

St Andrews Church Centre
Corner Ridge Rd and Vincent St
The main entrance is in Vincent Street
with parking in the grounds and
disabled parking near the basement
entrance.



Visitors welcome

The early speaker will be Brian talking on Passkeys, followed by a Christmas morning tea. Our main speaker is Kate, who will enlighten us with Christmas adventures !!



WELCOME TO 6 NEW MEMBERS

Terry Lister
Don Draper
Lynette Hitchen
Anne Mowles
Pamela Humby
Philip Roach



Rosemary is assembling our Christmas morning tea and because the asparagus rolls went well last time, I have offered to Rosemary to repeat the deal. My Christmas treat to you all.

Kate always wishes she has more time in her presentation slot so for December she is the guest speaker.

I've been assembling ideas for notes on the ins and outs of Passkeys. They are a recent development for more secure sign-in to online accounts and you may encounter them soon. Some of the large sites already offer passkeys while others have yet to take the plunge. I plan to finish the notes for the December meeting and introduce the concept in the early speaker slot.

Essentially when you sign up for a passkey online site it generates two codes, one which is stored on the site under your sign-in and the other is sent via a secure HPPTS internet connection to your device. You see neither and there is not much you have to do. The simplest case is a Windows PC. Behind the scene, your passkey for that site arrives and is encrypted by a special module (Trusted Privacy Module) then locked in a hidden store. Your part is to remember your account user-name and the PIN code that unlocks the store, thankfully the same PIN is used for every passkey site you set up so memorising becomes easier. (Each site of course has different passkeys.)

You have already used that PIN, as its the Windows Hello PIN that unlocks your screen and sign in to your Microsoft account but should be increased it to between 6 and 8 characters and my notes show how. So really you have been practising passkey sign-in since you first had Windows 10.

That's for a single device and I will show the various ways of making passkeys work over all your devices. The security stakes are really raised because nowhere are the passkeys visible and five things are needed to create a sign-in. Your user-name, time of day (so that any change of recording a key in transit quickly becomes invalid), the site key and your key must exchange challenges to show that the sign is valid and can only do that when you provide the PIN.

As a Christmas gift, rather than coming to a Passkey workshop send an email request to brian@senpak.nz and you can have a copy when I complete the notes and testing. Over time your old password notebook will become redundant.

My very best wishes to you each of for a safe and happy festive season.



What kind of motorbike does Santa ride? *A Holly Davidson!*

Ramblings

Wow, it is only a blink since last Christmas and now I need to find the Christmas cards box and write a few then get a mortgage to pay the postage. Would you believe I received a Christmas card from friends in New York in September. That was a real surprise. I looked at the postmark and it was sent on 19 December 2024. It had taken 9 months to get here. I wrote and told them not to bother sending one this year and I would open it in December and hang it up with the decorations.



Dawn Howarth

A month or so ago I put my watch forward 5 minutes, as my "Life's Little Instruction" calendar suggested. It took quite a while to get used to it, but now I think it is wonderful. Countless times I have been grateful when I rushing and later remember and I needn't panic, I am on time or early. I don't think I will ever put it back.

I will try add a Life's Little Instruction or two to the newsletters that may brighten your day or give you something new to try.

My chance to wish you all the very happiest Christmas and a wonderful New Year full of glorious surprises, (including Rainbow Pineapple Chunks).

Biased or unbiased? Truth or make believe?



Who would have thought that the talk I gave on November 7th on bias would have turned out to be so topical and that the BBC, the bastion of accuracy and neutrality, would find itself being sued for billions of dollars by Donald Trump.

In a Panorama documentary ("Trump: A Second Chance?") aired by the BBC, clips of Trump's January 6th speech were spliced together in a way that critics say changed the meaning.

Specifically, portions from very different times in the speech were joined to make it seem like Trump was directly urging his supporters to "fight like hell" after saying they would march to the Capitol.

In reality, he had said earlier that they should march "peacefully and patriotically," and the "fight like hell" phrase came nearly an hour later.

Having followed the BBC my whole adult life I must admit I was disappointed as I have so often relied on the BBC for accurate information. So where do you go to find unbiased factual material? Let us look at Wikipedia. How does Wikipedia rate and how does it work?



- Content created and edited by volunteers since 2001.
- Over 7 million articles in English and over 300 other languages.
- Extensive reference lists citing reliable sources .
- Managed by the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation with community moderation and open governance.
- However, despite efforts at neutrality, Wikipedia is subject to critiques (e.g., editor demographics, systemic biases) but it does have transparent mechanisms for correction.
- The platform is mature, widely used and studied and known for its strengths and weaknesses.

Wikipedia has a web page dedicated to rating sources for veracity and accuracy.

Type **Wikipedia: Reliable sources/Perennial sources/reliable** into your search bar.

This can be a valuable tool when using a search engine such as Google or Safari (Apple Users). Bias and accuracy of source material can be checked.

Elon Musk has been very critical of Wikipedia. He refers to it as

WOKEPEDIA

WOKE- Shorthand for socially conscious. Aware of racism, sexism, homophobia and environmental justice.

- He believes it is controlled by "far-left activists".
- Musk's criticised Wikipedia after his entry described a gesture he made during a speech as a "Nazi salute" (which he denied).
- Musk proposed to donate \$1 billion to the Wikimedia Foundation if they would change their name to "Dickipedia".



Elon Musk

As of October 2025, Musk launched his own answer to Wikipedia calling it Grokipedia. How do the two compare?

* At launch, Grokipedia had ~800,000+ articles (version 0.1), no images, and in far fewer languages .

* It is driven by the AI chatbot Grok to generate and revise its content. Human editing is less transparent and differently structured to that of Wikipedia.

* Controlled by the private company XAI. Governance, moderation, and community involvement undesignated.

* Still at early stage, many of the features are untested so higher risk of errors and bias. Unclear if there is any editorial oversight.

* Despite Musk's dislike of Wikipedia, many of the articles appear to come from that source.

Kate's Take continued ...

The evolution of Grokipedia from Twitter over 3 years

Twitter	X	Grok AI	Grokikipedia
			
2006 - 2022	2022	Nov 2023	Oct 2025

- Elon Musk bought Twitter for \$44 billion USD.
- 80% of staff were laid off.
- Moderation rules loosened leading increased misinformation.
- Musk champions free speech, as long as it isn't about himself.
- Musk plans to transform X into an "everything app", (à la China's WeChat).

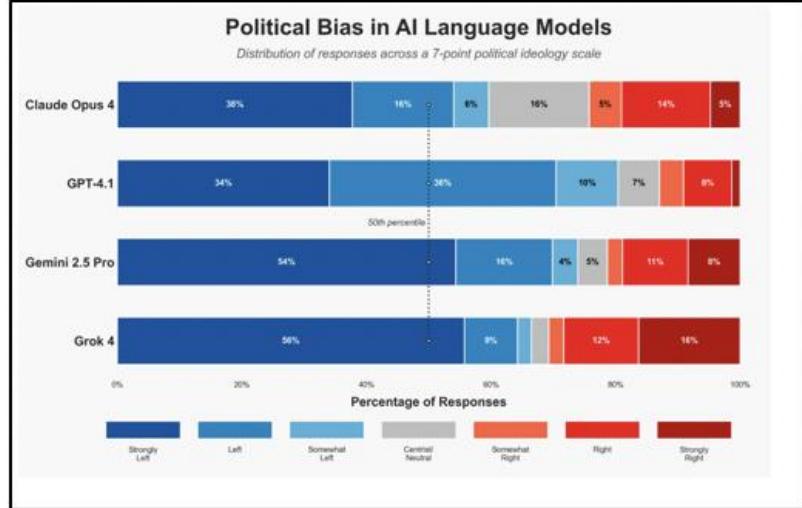
* The generative-AI chatbot Grok is popular with people who were Twitter users.

* It's supporters like its fun personality and its fast pick up from the internet.

* This group don't seem to have any issues with Grok using X as a source.

The image to the right has been sourced from a **Promptfoo** blog post titled ***Evaluating political bias in LLMs***. Promptfoo describes how they tested political bias in models like Claude Opus 4, ChatGPT-4.1, Gemini 2.5 Pro, and Grok 4 using a 7-point ideology scale. NB. The **RIGHT wing data is RED**, **LEFT wing data is BLUE**

Stop Press, Grok4.1 just released
Reviews indicate great improvement in functionality.




YouTube is another treasure trove of of information and entertainment but you still have to be cautious and discriminating.

- The example on the left is a collection of videos sourced by entering the subject of interest, **exercise for seniors over 60** in the search bar - See 1
- Check the source of your video. Who made it? - See 2 . Is it a reliable source?
- Check the age of the video.- See 3

This is particularly important regarding news and subjects that are being constantly updated.

NB. If you can't find a video you watched a while back, click on History. See 4 . Videos you have watched in the past are listed and can be retrieved.

K Senner Nov 25

GUEST SPEAKER - WARREN YARDLEY

Auckland's history revealed in the Auckland of today.



Warren Yardley

A big thank you to Warren Yardley for his fascinating talk on the hidden history of Auckland. Warren has been a journalist, school teacher and historian. Over the years he has explored countless kilometres of Auckland's streets, suburbs and volcanic cones gaining an encyclopaedic knowledge of its history, topology, myths and legends.

From its Māori origins to its British colonial past, Warren told us the stories of secret gifts, ghostly apparitions, and public outrage that are etched into the city's very foundation.

He asked us to imagine standing at Musick Point in the 1200's looking out over the waters seeing a single canoe as it appears on the horizon. This was the Tainui, one of the first great migration canoes, that arrived on these shores.

The Māori name for Auckland is **Tāmaki Makaurau** which translates to "a highly desired area," a title earned for several reasons:

- **Fertile Land**- The volcanic soil was perfect for cultivation.
- **Abundant Water**- Freshwater streams flowed from the hills to the sea.
- **Rich Seaford**- The harbours teemed with fish and shellfish.

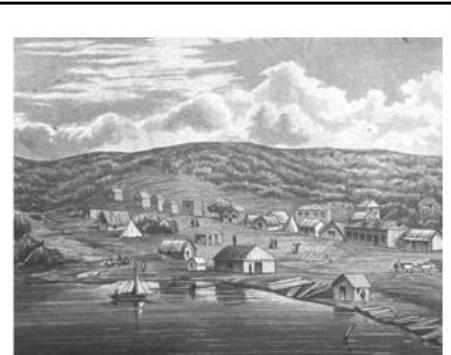
The establishment of Auckland as a British settlement began not with a conquest, but with a gift of land. This concept is known in Māori culture as a tuku. A tuku is more than a simple transaction. It is a reciprocal act built on understanding and mutual obligation. Imagine being handed a precious box containing someone's family treasures, like their greenstone (pounamu). You care for them, perhaps adorning them with new braided cords, before returning them. No rules are spoken, but a deep trust is established.

- The land was given for settlement.
- In return, the British soldiers offered security against invading tribes from other regions.

Auckland became capital in 1841. Prior to that Russell had been the capital but it was considered to be too isolated and the residents rather rough. In 1856, the seat of Government moved to Wellington.

Auckland was named after George Eden, 1st Earl of Auckland. He was a patron of William Hobson, the first Lieutenant Governor of New Zealand. The title, "Earl of Auckland" is derived from the Earl's family estate, which is a place called West Auckland in County Durham, England. Eden appears in many place names today such as Eden Park, Mount Eden and Eden Terrace.

The fact that the city was developed during the reign of Queen Victoria is also reflected in the place names such as Victoria Park and Victoria Street.



EARLY DAYS: Commercial Bay and Shortland Street in 1841 (Image: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 4-9089)

In the heart of the city, the stone wall winding through Albert Park is a powerful symbol of this early history. It was originally part of a barracks built to protect the new settlement from "marauding Māori." Yet, in a fascinating twist of irony, many Māori helped build the very wall designed to keep them out. At the time, they saw the soldiers as providing essential security against invaders from the north.

Before the barracks, this slope was known by its Māori name, Rangipuke. It was the site of Te Horotiu Pā, a prominent fortified village whose people relied on the Waihorotiu stream for their drinking water. The pā was ransacked in 1750 and never rebuilt, leaving the land silent until the British arrived. The stones of the park wall, therefore, sit on a land with much older stories.

Kate's Take continued ...

Queen Street- Although we think of Queen Street as the main thoroughfare in central Auckland today that wasn't always the case. Originally, the Waihorotiu stream used to flow along its length. The stream originated in Myers Park, a place described as one of Auckland's most spooky.

In the early days of the settlement the road that we call Queen Street today was a polluted "sewer" and a "total eyesore." People and horse-drawn carriages would often fall into the murky water while trying to cross on narrow planks. Eventually, the area now lower Queen Street was made habitable by removing soil from the nearby headland of Point Britomart. This massive land reclamation would forever change the city's shoreline.

Point Britomart was named after HMS Britomart and it was on the point where the captain raised the flag. HMS Britomart surveyed the Waitematā Harbour in 1841. Its name was also used for the Fort Britomart military barracks built in 1860s.

Vulcan Lane was originally going to be named Victoria Lane. However, the locals named it "Vulcan" Lane as at the end of the lane stood a large foundry, the "Vulcan", where men worked with massive metal furnaces. The workers would say they were "going to the Vulcan," and the name stuck.

One of the most historic buildings in Vulcan Lane is the Queensferry Hotel. Before the reclamation project that buried the Waihorotiu stream, the harbour was a different shape entirely. The water came right up to the building, so high that sailors could row their longboats to a secret door and enter the hotel directly from the water. The original shoreline lapped near modern-day Short Street and climbed up a cliff at Banks Road.

The Queensferry itself is said to be haunted. This sense of a lingering past is a feeling some visitors still report at the Queensferry today.



*South side of Vulcan Lane, 1880s,
George Grey Special Collections.*

Crime and Punishment in Early Auckland - Auckland's early penal institutions were places of dread and despair. A look at the city's first jails reveals a grim history. The first jail was on the corner of Victoria and Queen Streets (now ANZ Bank). It was described as overcrowded and "horrible," with gallows and stocks.



The stockade enclosure at Mount Eden Jail, looking from a nearby hill, 1856

Auckland Public Library

It was only changed after a senior official's wife visited and declared it was "disgraceful." It was demolished in 1865. The Old Mount Eden prison we can see today started life as a military stockade in 1856. The stone wall surrounding it was completed in 1872.

Outrage over City icons –

Auckland University Clock Tower - When this iconic building was completed, it caused public "fury." Citizens thought its design was "un-British" and mocked it for looking like a "wedding cake." Newspapers even warned women not to walk past it at dusk for fear of being frightened.

His Majesty's Theatre - This beloved heritage theatre was demolished on Christmas Eve. Demolition crews, claiming they were just there to "change the seats," began tearing it down. The loss of the building sparked "city wide outrage."

Modern Auckland is a city built upon visible and invisible layers of history. The names of our streets, the stones in our park walls, and the very ground beneath our feet tell stories of Māori heritage, colonial settlement, crime, and progress.

On Saturdays and Sundays, from 10.00am to 12.30 pm you can book a free tour. Enter "Auckland Free walking Tours". into your search bar for further information.

K Senner Nov 2025



Life's Little Instruction: When complimented, a sincere "thank you" is the only response required.

COMMITTEE

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COURSE TIMETABLES, HELP DAYS AND COURSE BOOKING INFORMATION

To view all SeniorNet courses and timetable, click here

<http://www.senpak.nz/courses/>

DECEMBER HELP DAYS

Tues 2nd 10am
Wed 10th 10am

NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY



Course Booking Information

- * You need to be a member of SeniorNet to take part in our classes.
- * If you need assistance in deciding on a course, please contact the Tutor who will answer any questions and also take your booking.
- * We require you to pay a course fee to cover the cost of notes and other expenses. Please bring the correct cash to the first session.
- * Our Courses are all held at our Learning Centre at
12 Ben Lomond Crescent, Pakuranga.
- * Please park on the road or in the Gym carpark across the road as no parking is permitted on site. **If you use the gym parking (not available Monday or Thursday mornings) it is important that you park on the left, next to the gym. You can printout the parking advice from our website (under the Courses tab) or write your own and leave on the dashboard of your car.**

