

# The Newsletter of the Friends of Pukekura Park

Volume 2, Number 2  
October 2007



## New Zealand Pigeon eating Loquat fruits in Pukekura Park

David Medway

The loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*) is a small evergreen tree native to China and Japan. Three mature specimens grow in Pukekura Park on the hillside between the Fernery and the Bandroom lawn. Their large yellowish fruits ripen from late November through December when they are sometimes eaten by the New Zealand pigeon or kereru (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*).



## Let's protect the food sources

Many of the less attractive looking trees and shrubs in Pukekura Park and Brooklands provide food for birds, particularly during the cooler winter months. Those plants need our on-going protection so they are not inadvertently removed.

Any whim of beautification could so easily wipe out an important source of food for birds. Park staff and Friends need to know, respect and preserve those important plants.



Tui on *Phormium cookianum*  
(since removed) in Pukekura Park

Ornithologist, David Medway, has studied the birds of Pukekura Park and Brooklands for many years and knows their feeding habits. Following another fascinating and informative Friends walk, led by David Medway, scientist, Elise Smith, has offered to map and record those precious food-source plants to help ensure their preservation. Progressively, David and Elise will geo-reference the locations of the key plants so that Park staff know of their significance and consult before any clearing or felling operations take place.

The Friends also believe that Park staff would find these walks extremely interesting and beneficial. The birds would benefit too!

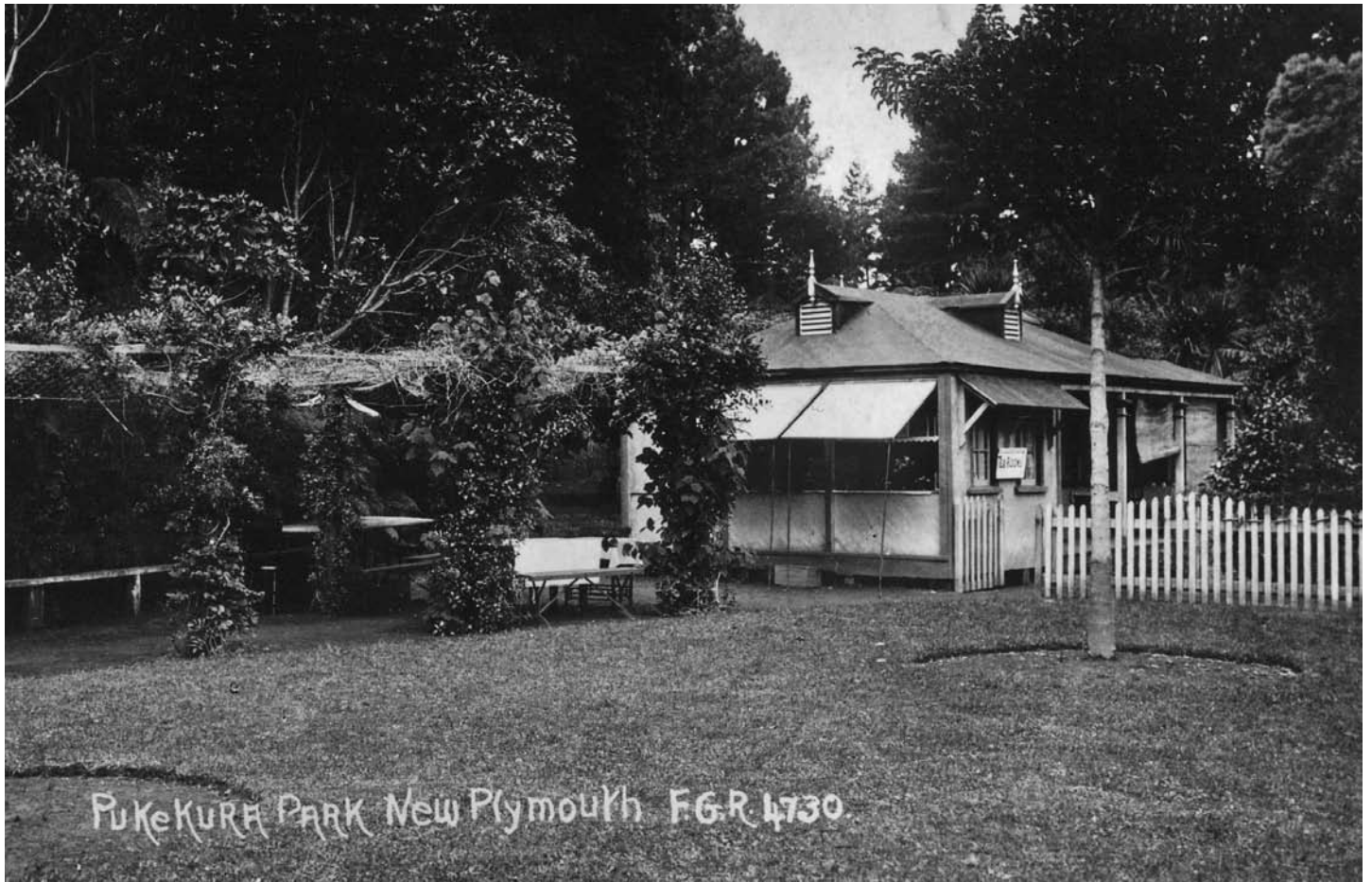
Karl K Rossiter  
President

This Newsletter is made possible through the generous support of the George Mason Charitable Trust

## The first Pukekura Park tea rooms

David Medway

At its meeting on 20 February 1905 the Recreation Grounds Board, predecessor of the Pukekura Park Board, resolved that “If funds permit a ladies’ room with all conveniences will be erected in the grounds” (*Taranaki Herald* 21/2/1905). In his report presented to the Board at its annual meeting on 3 May 1905 the retiring Chairman, Clement W. Govett, said: “It has long been felt that there was no accommodation for ladies, and the Board, acting on a faith that has never failed them, have gladly accepted the offer of the Builders’ Association to supply all the work required to put up a handsome building, with tea room attached, and not exactly knowing where the money is coming from, have pledged themselves to supply about £50 worth of material required” (*Taranaki Herald* 28/4/1905, 4/5/1905).



The “handsome building with tea room attached”, situated behind the former bathing shed and the present Tea House, was completed by the time the Board met on 5 July 1905. Instructions were given to fence in the garden round the building. The Secretary, E. H. Tribe, reported that, owing to the expense incurred in its erection, the Board was now working on an overdraft (*Taranaki Herald* 10/7/1905). The statement of receipts and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 1906 shows that the building cost the Board £68 16s 11d, and that it was in overdraft at the Bank of New Zealand in the sum of £61 10s 9d for which certain individual members of the Board were personally liable (*Taranaki Herald* 3/5/1906, 14/6/1906).

In his report for the year ended 31 March 1906 the Chairman, F.P.Corkill, said: “Through the energy of our Secretary, Mr Tribe, a ladies’ room has been erected in a central position in the Grounds, and we believe that this will be much appreciated by those for whom it has been provided. This summer it has been mainly used as a tea room, but this is not the purpose for which it was designed, and for the future it will always be available for the convenience of lady visitors and particularly those accompanied by children” (*Taranaki Herald* 7 & 14/6/1906).

The first formal function to be held in the new ladies’ room appears to have been the meeting which the Board, on 2 August 1905, decided to call to consider the question of holding a floral fete in aid of the funds of the Board (*Taranaki Herald* 4/8/1905). The last formal function to be held in the building was on 17 October 1929 when control of Pukekura Park was formally handed over to the New Plymouth Borough Council (*Taranaki Herald*



17/10/1929). It appears that at some time after 1914 the building became known as the tea kiosk, from when it may have functioned solely as tea rooms. The accompanying photograph of the former tea rooms, reproduced from a post card, was taken by F.G. Radcliffe in 1914.

Thomas Horton, superintendent of the Park at the time, recorded in his work diaries, now in Puke Ariki, that on 27-31 October 1931 he and his men were "Assisting to remove old Tea Kiosk etc". The new tea kiosk was formally handed over and opened by its donors, Mr and Mrs C. H. Burgess, on 14 November 1931 (*Taranaki Herald* 14/11/1931).

## The Tea House wisterias

David Medway

The accompanying photograph of the former tea rooms also shows part of the fence that was erected around the garden beside the building in 1905, and an outside seating area which was probably created at the same time and is still there today. The old *Wisteria sinensis* and *Wisteria floribunda* 'Violacea Plena' plants which are growing in and over the seating area probably also date from 1905, in which event they are at least 100 years of age. The history, age and size of these wisterias warrant their inclusion among the notable plants of Pukekura Park.



## Digital award challenge for Friends

Karl Rossiter, President

The current challenge for Friends is to coordinate our \$200,000 project to preserve the history of Pukekura Park. Central government's Digital Strategy Fund now enables the Friends to collect, collate, digitise and archive important Park records in association with Puke Ariki.

This is a project led by a team of Friends volunteers and involves all members in one way or another. Please help us to identify those within the community who you know have an interest in Pukekura Park and its history, ecology, botanical collections, flora and fauna. We need to harness that interest and expertise into our archiving project. We will provide training and guidance to individual volunteers and to special interest work groups.

Our financial grant creates a wonderful opportunity to cement the relationship between Puke Ariki and the Friends by working in collaboration on the T.E.R:R.A.I.N project (Taranaki Educational Resource: Research, Analysis and Information Network). Scientist and Friends executive member, Elise Smith, has been the catalyst in bringing this archive research project to fruition, and ornithologist and historian, David Medway, has established a quality template to guide the process.

A comprehensive and definitive archive is a prerequisite for a Pukekura Park Information Centre and for our own website.

To initiate the project, George Fuller, former Pukekura Park Curator, has assigned to the Friends his extensive collection of personal diaries, papers and plant records that relate to the Park. Friends will work with George to assess the materials and compile a George Fuller section within the Pukekura Park archive at Puke Ariki. Assembling this ecological history will be fascinating for the Friends involved... and we invite your interest and your participation. The reward for contributing to such a community project will be the satisfaction of creating a Pukekura Park archive for use by future generations. Please become involved!



## Spring is in the air

Donna Christiansen, Technical Officer Fernery and Display Houses

Spring fever has taken hold with the Fernery/Display Houses having a thorough scrubbing. The plants are now responding to the increased light levels. Spring has also inspired some revamping of areas surrounding the entranceways to the Fernery/Display Houses. The Horton Walk entranceway has been cleaned and weeded, and further plantings to provide a more ordered look hopefully will entice people to venture inside. The Fred Parker lawn entranceway has been greatly improved. Also the bank above the tunnel entrance is being cleaned and planted to provide some colour and more appeal. These revamps will also improve our profile in time for the Rhododendron Festival. During the festival we will be holding free guided tours of the Fernery/Display Houses every day at 1pm, so do come and join in. On display will be vireya rhododendrons, orchids, begonias, *Coleus*, *Impatiens*, and our beautiful *Streptocarpus* collection.

During the next month or so you will see a lot of cinerarias, McMillan polyanthus, trilliums, azaleas, veltheimias, vireyas, and primulas. Colour is not our only attraction as form and texture are very prevalent with the use of foliage plants such as *Coleus*, bromeliads and calatheas. Keep an eye open for the Chilean bellflower *Lapageria rosea* which

continues to flower after months of performance. Trilliums are in flower, and the *Corybas* orchids are also putting on a wonderful display in House 1 above the tunnel entrance to House 2. These native spider orchids are fascinating and we have two species, *Nematoceras iridescens* (syn. *Corybas iridescens*) and *Nematoceras papa* (syn. *Corybas papa*). Also in Houses 2 and 3 we have *Chiloglottis* orchids with a flower that looks like an insect. The flower is designed to attract insects to ensure pollination. You will also see the *Pterostylis* orchids which are a fascinating terrestrial orchid. The *Masdevallia* orchids cannot be missed with their stunning colour and form at the top of the House 1-House 2 tunnel.

A new point of interest is a history board in the Horton Walk entranceway with information about times past, and people who have been part of the ongoing life and development of the Fernery/Display Houses. We have some fascinating photos of the old days. If you have any similar photos you would like to share with us, please bring them in.





## Fernery entrance

Margaret Rossiter

The Fernery entrance has a new look. Not drastic – just effective.

The rockery outside has been carefully reshaped and the golden hinoki cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Aurea') has been “crown lifted”. Ian Hutchinson, Technical Officer Pukekura, explains this is the correct term for pruning to thin out selected limbs in order to lighten the top of a tree.

This makes the Fernery entrance and steps visible from a distance – a great help to visitors looking for the Display Houses.

The team has cut and poisoned the climbing fig (*Ficus pumila*) which was scrambling through the cypress. Ian says, “The Auckland Regional Council is considering adding this thug to its list of noxious weeds”.

The entrance has been enhanced with vireya plantings – bushy plants on the brushsticks high up, pendulous varieties on the bank, and a number of white vireya ‘Popcorn’ in between.

Donna Christiansen and Judy Harre of the Fernery staff have planted the rockery with *Aechmea fasciata* (bromeliad), *Euphorbia* ‘Tui’, *Dianella tasmanica*, and *Pratia* ‘Starlight’. Several more Poor Knights lilies (*Xeronema callistemon*) have been added.



Photo - Derek Hughes

## Pukekura Park Ramblers

Marie-Nui Biss

Pukekura Park Ramblers meet every second Monday of the month, for a one hour walk to discover and enjoy the many paths and tracks within the Park. A different route is followed each month. At a leisurely pace, participants delight in the many features, vistas, and sounds each pathway offers.

Walks to date have explored the areas around the Scanlan Lookout, Eastern Lookout, Stainton Dell, and Brooklands Park to Rhododendron Dell where ramblers admired many flowering magnolias of different varieties. On the ramble through Stainton Dell the scent of the Himalayan daphne (*Daphne bholua*) greeted the group on its way to the top of the southern terraces overlooking Pukekura Park's famous cricket ground. During these walks, participants share their knowledge of plant life and bird life, and of events that have happened, or are about to happen, in the Park. At the end of the ramble, some participants enjoy lunch and a chat at the Tea House.



Photo - George Moratti

For further information  
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Mary Morris - Tel: 758 9577,  
or  
Marie-Nui Biss - Tel: 757 4756.



Photo - George Moratti



### Palm Lawn

Margaret Rossiter

The Palm Lawn has suddenly grown up and once spindly palms have become majestic. The new plantings of vibrant vireyas make appropriate companions. Ian Hutchinson, Technical Officer Pukekura, says the vireyas will give both spring and autumn colour and have a sub-tropical feel in keeping with the palms. Some of the adjacent *Plectranthus* collection has also been moved to give a splash of late summer colour to the Palm Lawn. Also featured are nikau palms from a variety of locations - Northland, West Coast, Great Barrier Island and the Chatham Islands. The large *Phoenix rupicola* (photo - left) originates from India, with others hailing from Brazil, Lord Howe Island and China. The Palm Lawn is sheltered and part-shady which Ian Hutchinson says suits palms well, and they are pretty trouble free too.



### Pukekura Park horticulturist Chris Vork

Margaret Rossiter

Congratulations to Chris Vork, Area Coordinator Brooklands. As winner of the Amenity Sector of the 2007 Young Horticulturist of the Year competition recently held at the Wellington Botanic Garden, Chris Vork has a tough row to hoe as he prepares for the New Zealand Horticultural Industry Training Organisation's national finals taking place in early November. There he will be up against other sector winners from the fruit, wine, vegetable, nursery, florist, botanic gardens and landscape sectors – all in competition for the overall winner's title.

It will be no easy day for Chris. As well as written and practical exams, a one and a half hour computer assignment, and an interview with three judges, there is also a three-minute speech to get through. But Chris is in good hands. He works alongside Ray Pope (on right), and says Ray has something new for him to learn every day. He pays high tribute to his other trainer, Ian Hutchinson, Technical Officer Pukekura.

The Friends wish Chris the best of luck for his "big day" on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November.





Chris Connolly, Curator Pukekura Park

With the new financial year, and improving weather, several works planned in Pukekura Park have now been started. The main gates and wall along the Fillis Street boundary of the Park are receiving a spruce-up. Other cleaning and painting work will be carried out as weather permits, including the Victoria Road gates, the picket fence by the turf shed, the boatshed, and the ticket boxes.

The landscape immediately around the Tea House is being replanted with a selection of plants to enhance this important location and create improved views of the lake from the Tea House and views of the Tea House from the western side of the lake.

Many of the new plantings in the Park have been completed, particularly in a number of high profile areas, including near the entrances. The plantings have been selected to provide additions to the existing plant collection, to improve the appearance of key areas, and to provide habitat and a food source for birds. Approximately 3250 new plants will be added to the Park this year.

A number of other works are underway which include track maintenance, tree work, turf improvements, and preparations for the TSB Bank Festival of Lights. The waterwheel has also been repaired.



*Photo - Derek Hughes*

## **George Fuller, orchids and Pukekura Park**

George Fuller's love affair with Pukekura Park began in 1964 when nurseryman Fred Parker donated his orchid collection to the Park, conditional on the employment of George to care for it! By 1966 George had progressed to become Curator of Pukekura and Brooklands...

The spectacular Indonesian orchid species with its multiple trailing flower spikes featured opposite and on the back cover of this Newsletter has a distinctive Pukekura history. George Fuller introduced it to the Pukekura Park orchid collection in April 1986 directly from the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in a plant swap. It was imported as *Coelogyne dayana*. However, recent botanical research has discovered that it had been identified in northern Borneo 20 years prior to it being named in 1882 after John Day, a prominent English orchid collector and botanical artist. This revelation has led to an official change of nomenclature to *Coelogyne pulverula*. The literal translation of *pulverula*, "as if dusted with powder", refers to the mass of delicate flowers on each of many spikes. The Pukekura plant photographed by George Fuller in February 2004 has 17 trailing flower spikes up to 1.45m in length with each carrying up to 50 flowers. Such vigour bears testimony to the expertise of the staff in the Fernery and Display Houses who tend the orchid collection. This unique photo of *Coelogyne pulverula* 'Cutie' has been requested for publication by the Australian Orchid Review and will once again associate George Fuller, recently elected Patron of the Orchid Council of New Zealand, with the Pukekura Park orchid collection. The next edition of the Friends Newsletter will document the history of the collection.



*Photo - George Fuller*





## *Events for Friends*

For further information about any Friends' activities please phone:

Heather Allen: 758 0310

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Mary Morris: 758 9577

### **PUKEKURA PARK RAMBLERS**

Off the beaten track. A one hour walk 10.30 – 11.30 am every 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month. Discover new paths. Bring a friend.

Call one of the leaders (above) for more details.

Meet at the Victoria Road Car Park for the October 8<sup>th</sup> ramble.

### **FERNERY VISIT**

Tour the Fernery with Donna Christiansen,  
Technical Officer Fernery and Display Houses

Date: Wednesday 10 October.

Time: 10:00 am

Meet at the main Fernery Entrance.

An exceptional opportunity to learn about  
unique collections and their growing conditions.

### **FRIENDS' END OF YEAR "THANK YOU" TO PARK STAFF**

Date: Wednesday 5 December.

Time: Noon until 1.00pm

Location: Bellringer Pavilion

This is the Friends' annual luncheon for staff who work in and administer Pukekura and Brooklands Parks, the Zoo and the Fernery. It is an opportunity to thank the staff for maintaining the Park to such high standards. We invite all Friends to attend and contribute a plate of finger food.

**Newsletter Design by Derek's Darkroom Limited**

**Printing kindly sponsored by Graphix Explosion**

*Coelogyne pulverula 'Cutie'*

*Photo - George Fuller*

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