

**EVENTS  
for  
Friends**

**WALKS**

**Plants for Birds**

There have been lots of requests for another walk through Pukekura Park with David Medway.

Date: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May  
Time: 10:00am  
Meet at : Bellringer Pavilion



David Medway



**Meet the Park Curator**

Come for a walk in Pukekura Park with our new Curator, Chris Connolly. Find out how he views Pukekura and Brooklands, and how he thinks it should be managed, and the likely priorities.

Date: Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July  
Time: 3:00pm – 5:00pm  
Meet at : Bellringer Pavilion

**TRIPS**

**Bason Botanic Garden, Wanganui**

Field trip to Bason Botanical Gardens, Wanganui on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> of September. Transport and cost to be organised nearer the date.

**Membership Fees for 2007 \$15 for each family or address**

Our financial year is from 1<sup>st</sup> February until 31<sup>st</sup> January  
Please send your cheque to: The Treasurer  
Friends of Pukekura Park Inc.,  
44 Essex Street,  
New Plymouth



If you have an **email address**, please send it to Margot Wiseman [margw@paradise.net.nz](mailto:margw@paradise.net.nz)

**General contact::**

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The Newsletter of the Friends of Pukekura Park



Volume 2, Number 1

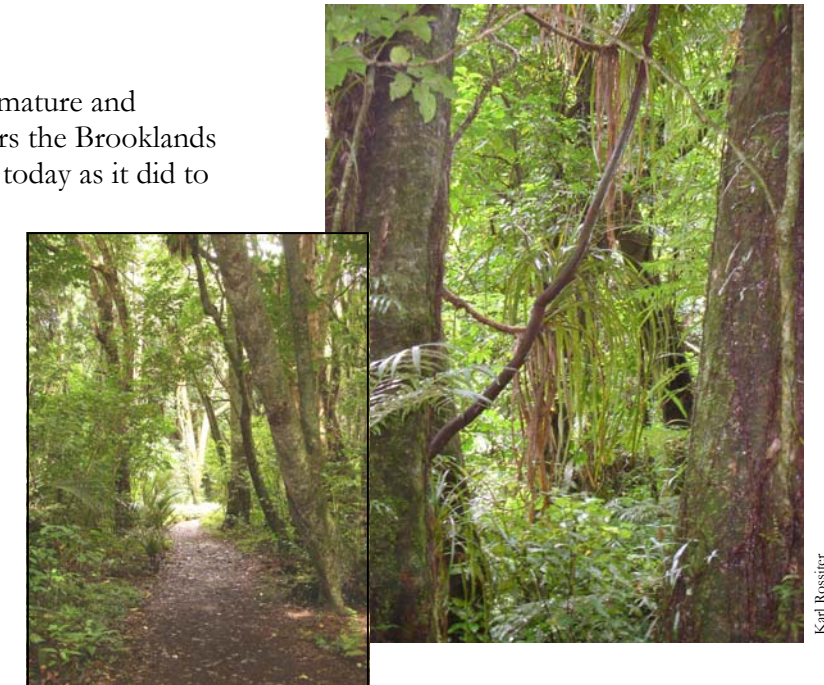
May 2007

**The Newsletter of the Friends of Pukekura Park**

**Beauty Spot**

Step back in time and explore the mature and spectacular native bush that borders the Brooklands lawn. It must look much the same today as it did to our forefathers when they faced that impenetrable lowland forest that blanketed Taranaki from the coast to the mountain.

There is a wonderful 150 metre track that meanders through this tangled jungle and links the Brooklands lawn with the Giant Puriri. You'll experience the natural cycle of regeneration from seedlings struggling for light, to the dense canopy formed by the giants. It's well worth the walk...



Karl Rossiter

**Recycling**

Two very successful plant sales were organised by the Friends, with a view to funding projects and assisting displays in the Fernery. Park staff donated surplus plant material which was potted-up and grown-on by a group of volunteers. The proceeds allowed the Friends to purchase this elegant water feature for the Fernery.



Bev Moratti



Adrienne Tuham



Elise Smith

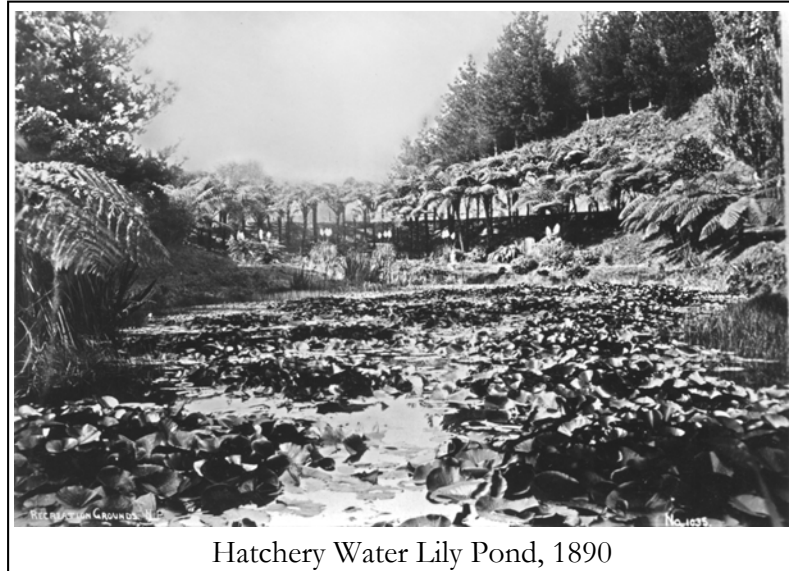
This Newsletter is made possible through the generous support of the George Mason Charitable Trust

# Track Notes

## Forefathers and Foresight... our challenge as Caretakers of the Future

Karl Rossiter, President Friends of Pukekura Park

A walk through Pukekura Park or Brooklands can be quite humbling. The fact that in 1876 our forefathers had the vision and resolve to set aside and develop a "Botanic Garden and Public Recreation Grounds" for the people of New Plymouth is extraordinary. As George Fuller writes in his article, the area was really unkempt rubbish-land in its early days. But founder of what has now become Pukekura Park, Robert Hughes, soon had plans, plantings and excavations underway. By 1890 the water lilies in the Hatchery pond were spectacular!



Hatchery Water Lily Pond, 1890

George Fuller Archives

It is this history of the Park that is so important to our future. History allows us to allocate credit to our city forefathers and acknowledge the landscaping and early plantings that established what we enjoy today. David Medway has been researching the Park's early plantings and his article in this Newsletter provides a fascinating documentary.

Meanwhile Elise Smith continues to research ways to 'unlock' the history of the Park and to enliven the information so that it becomes interactively useful and accessible to all of us. Elise is leading a project whereby the Friends of Pukekura Park assist NPDC and Puke Ariki to capture, collate and catalogue information for recall electronically by a future Pukekura Park Information Centre. This is part of a nation-wide Digital Strategy to ensure that historical and cultural information is not lost to future generations... or as Elise would say, "lost through generational amnesia!"

You will notice that this Newsletter reflects the history of the Park which serves to remind us of our custodial responsibilities - a fact that NPDC acknowledged when recently re-instating a dedicated Curator for Pukekura Park. Welcome Chris Connolly. The Park needs you!

One of the miracles that Chris Connolly will have to perform is a balancing act between the Park's ecology and the numerous conflicts that emerge from so many Park users with such diverse expectations. The Park serves all interests, from recreation and relaxation, to botanical and ornithological study. Beauty and art are often said to be complementary, so we await with interest the 'floating' of Michael Smither's 'Aotearoa' just above the surface of the Lily Lake!

Pukekura Park and its grandeur remains the centre piece and backdrop to ever increasing foot traffic and scheduled events. However the Park is an asset which must never be compromised. Luckily, plants are remarkably resilient and quick to heal as long as the weather cooperates and Park staff add a helping hand. The damage from 45,000 pairs of feet at WOMAD healed remarkably well. It is vehicle tracking that left the marks. WOMAD is an extreme burden to place on Brooklands every year and on the staff and resources required for restoration.

## Pukekura Park and Brooklands recognised for their significance

Pukekura Park and Brooklands have been assessed as a Garden of National Significance by the New Zealand Gardens Trust (NZGT).

The recognition comes as the Park and the TSB Bank Festival of Lights are climbing the ladder in an online vote to be featured on the latest version of the New Zealand Monopoly board game.

In its assessment of the Park, the NZGT describes Pukekura and Brooklands as:

'A beautiful park in a superb natural landscape. Magnificent trees cover a rolling landscape and a sinuous lake winds through the Park creating interest and contrast.

'Pockets of horticultural delights unfold gradually drawing the visitor in and on. Development makes good use of the natural form of the landscape and there is a logical and legible flow through the site with quirky and interesting additions such as the Chinese garden to maintain public interest

'The resultant atmosphere is serene and the scale relationship is harmonious. Maintenance levels are uniformly high.'

Manager Parks, Mark Bruhn, says: "The NZGT's assessment is fantastic news. It's just the tonic as we head into a new era with a dedicated Curator for the Park".

## The Drinking Fountain



Margaret Rossiter

Wanton vandalism of the Park's historic drinking fountain, erected to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, was extreme and the damage severe.

NPDC has sought advice from a stone conservator and is assessing options for a possible return to the fountain's former glory.

The drinking fountain, as in David Medway's mid 1950s photo, has been the backdrop for many a visitor's picture over the years. It was attacked on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2007.



David Medway

## Member comment

Ian Barry



Karl Rossiter

As a member of "The Friends of Pukekura Park", I'm concerned at the lack of attention being given to the Maranui Gully, especially on the eastern side where the macrocarpas were removed and the area left to regenerate. The Gully still hosts some of the original bush and is therefore a key area for preserving the "natural look" of the Park.

Good regeneration of native plants in the Gully is taking place, but also doing well are competitive pest plants such as convolvulus, old man's beard, blackberry, asparagus weed, woolly night shade and gorse. To become an area of true native bush a pest plant eradication programme is needed.

The planting of some specimen native trees would also be worthwhile.

# Friends

## Park Scrap-booking

Having been born and bred in New Plymouth, I grew up with Pukekura Park as my playground. I have always had a great love of the Park, and very early on I learned to know it well. My parents always referred to the Park as "The Rec" (i.e. the 'Recreation Ground', as it was known for many years).

When I joined a marching team in my early teens, the sports ground in the Park served a double purpose as both a practice ground and venue for our marching competitions.

Some time later, after joining "Friends", I assisted with guided tours around the Park. In 1998 I succeeded Joan Griffiths in the collection of interesting news items appearing in local newspapers. We continue to preserve these articles in scrapbooks for posterity, and having filled two, our clippings are currently overflowing into a third.

## Dell Pope



## A special Park

What a joy it is to share our Park with a world of visitors at Festival time! Whole families of wide-eyed children excitedly seek the giant and the gorilla. People, young and old, carrying chairs, head for the music. Many visit from far off countries or from other parts of New Zealand. For once the pace is leisurely as people take time to wander and enjoy the beauty that has been created for them.

"It's just magic," they say. Some reach into their pockets to pay, and are surprised and delighted that such a spectacle and entertainment is provided free. Others stop to tell us of the friendliness of New Plymouth people. One young woman from Austria came to the Park on three nights, had tea with me, and fulfilled her dream to climb our mountain (fortunately visible for at least part of each day while she was here).

New Plymouth is definitely "the place to be". We have so much to offer, and at the top of the list is our very special Park!

## Dorothy Anderson

## Buggy

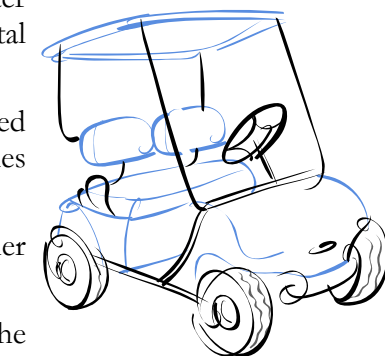
We have recently joined the team of drivers for the Buggy and have enjoyed meeting some interesting people. A special booking came in for a group of gentlemen from the Molly Ryan Lifecare Complex. They were all thrilled to enjoy the outing and two in particular had direct connections with the Park.

As we all sat admiring the fountain Gerry Gerrard said "I made that!" It transpired that he was an engineer with work involving farm machinery and he made the water jets for the fountain about 52 years ago. He also helped locate a vital part for the water wheel about 30 years ago.

When we arrived in the TSB Bowl of Brooklands Leo Ferguson related to us his role in the Jaycees helping to organize fund-raising activities for the development of the new entertainment venue in the late 1950s.

Another man on an earlier trip was proud to tell us that his grandfather helped to dig out the main lake about 130 years ago.

It must be very satisfying indeed for people such as these to see the results of their work still giving pleasure to so many people.



## Claire and Allan Purdy

## From the Archives

## George Fuller

This photograph is of special interest to anyone studying the Park's administrative history. It was previously displayed in the Tea House, and appeared in A.B Scanlan's book 'Pukekura' which was published in 1978 to commemorate the Park's centennial in 1976.

It was taken by William S. Oakley on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1934 shortly after the Brooklands handing-over ceremony, at which time Brooklands was gifted to the people of New Plymouth. The ceremony was attended by Lord Bledisloe. To my knowledge there are relatively few photographs of early administrators of the Park, so this one is unique in that it depicts those in various leading roles covering a span of 58 critical years from 1876 to 1934.

The remarkable length of that time-span was made possible by the presence of Robert Clinton Hughes, pictured in the centre of the front row. As a young solicitor, keen on swimming, he foresaw the potential of developing a neglected, treeless, steep-sided valley, with no level ground, into a recreational and botanical area – a great leap of faith which aroused the interest and support of a few friends.



Money was laid down in support, a trust formed, and project approval granted. The Town Board insisted that the development "should not be an impediment to the ratepayers" - or words to that effect.

A committee was formed and went into action with dramatic success, buoyed by a very responsive community. Robert C. Hughes served the Park for nearly 60 years, which must surely constitute a record. His inspiration and leadership ensured a rich heritage. Standing at the left of the picture is Tom Boulton, Head Gardener at Brooklands for many years until the handing-over.

Also standing is Thomas H. Horton, a renowned and successful nurseryman from Hastings who was Curator of Pukekura (and following this occasion, Brooklands) from 1924 to 1949.

Sitting at the left is Jas. McLeod, Chairman of the Pukekura Park Committee at the time.

The person sitting at the right is William Walter Smith, who was Curator of Pukekura Park from 1908 to 1920. How fortunate we are that this photograph was taken to preserve the memory of these notable people who played such a crucial role in the development of Pukekura and Brooklands Parks.

## The History of Pukekura Park - a living legacy

## Elise Smith

Retrieving and properly collating the Park's historic records in a user-friendly format for public access has been a long held ambition of the Friends. A project, in association with Puke Ariki and New Plymouth District Council, to realise such a resource is now under consideration for funding by the Digital Strategy Community Partnership Fund. Ultimately we wish to make available information about the Park through an information centre and through a web portal. Visitors will be able to ask questions to discover historical information, facts about plant collections, wildlife, locations of plants, and routes to features of interest in the Park. We intend that there will be links to sound and film archives.

This is a pilot project for T.E.R.R.A.I.N. (Taranaki Educational Resource: Research, Analysis and Information Network) to determine the approach and methodology required to identify community data sources, digitise these, and then make appropriate data accessible to the public using a Geographical Information System (GIS).

If members have information about the Park which is interesting - historically, botanically or socially, please get in touch with a committee member.

## Who planted the Kaimata Street shelter belt ?

David Medway

On my “Plants for birds” walk at Brooklands in August 2005, we followed the former Nature Trail through Ambush Gully and the rows of tall Lawsoniana (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) that grow parallel to Kaimata Street on the southern boundary of the Park. While we were at the Lawsoniana, the inevitable two questions were asked - who planted those trees, and how old are they? It is now possible to provide definitive answers to both.

Thomas Horton was Curator of Pukekura Park (to which Brooklands was added in 1934) for 25 years from 1924 until 1949. Fortuitously, a collection of Horton’s papers still survives in the Pukekura Park archive at Puke Ariki in New Plymouth. Among them is his work diary for the period 13 August 1937 to 9 November 1943, and a report on Brooklands, dated 30 December 1933, that Horton and Thomas Boulton, Newton King’s head gardener, provided to the Pukekura Park Board. This report was published in full in the *Taranaki Herald* of 10 January 1934. In it Horton and Boulton said, under the heading Shelter Belt: “All that area between Messrs Grundy, Bond & Shepherd’s boundary, on the western side of the bush, we suggest be planted with suitable shelter trees; and that this shelter be extended (at least half a chain wide) along the whole of the southern side of the bush to Mr List’s gully”.

This shelter belt was not planted until nine years later. Horton recorded in his work diary that five men spent 22 and 23 July 1942 planting trees at “Brooklands, Kaimata St.”. He listed the trees they planted on those days as 106 five-year old and 20 three-year old Lawsoniana, 40 five-year old Totara (*Podocarpus totara*), 40 four-year old Kowhai (*Sophora microphylla*), and 24 Rewarewa (*Knightsia excelsa*) age not stated.

Today, several rows of planted Totara and Lawsoniana are growing on the Kaimata Street frontage of the Park over a distance of about 125 metres from the Brooklands Road end. There are some 30 Totara in this section. At the eastern end of these rows, above the small gully containing the large London Plane (*Platanus acerifolia*) tree, is a group of about twelve Lawsoniana, probably planted there to provide extra protection at this exposed position. Interspersed among the Lawsoniana and Totara are several tall Rewarewa and a few tall Kowhai. All of these trees must be part of the shelter belt that was planted on 22 and 23 July 1942.

Originally, this shelter belt extended eastward along the Kaimata Street boundary effectively as far as “Mr List’s gully”, now Maranui Gully, as Horton and Boulton in 1933 suggested it should. This portion seems to have consisted mostly of Lawsoniana, nearly all of which have since been felled. The rows of Lawsoniana that once grew on the western boundary between the Park and the private properties to which Horton and Boulton referred were undoubtedly part of the same shelter belt planting. They were still standing in August 1968, but the row closest to Kaimata Street was felled, probably soon after that date, to be replaced by the camellias which grow on that boundary now.



The Lawsoniana shelter belt



David among the Totara which were planted in 1942

Karl Rossiter

Karl Rossiter

# Cuttings

## From the Fernery

Christmas and summer have come and gone and we had 10,897 visitors through The Fernery & Display Houses during December, January and February. There were lots of locals showing off our wonderful Park, and thousands of overseas visitors who could hardly believe what they were seeing.

A few comments from our visitor’s book:

“I only came here to get away from my wife, but it’s nice anyway.” Auckland

“Beautiful as always, over 60 years of visits.” New Plymouth

“Surpasses even the Winter Gardens in Aberdeen!! Fantastic.” New immigrants to New Plymouth

Our Christmas display with Maude created great amusement and she had her photo taken with hundreds of people.

It has been an incredible growing season for the fuchsias. We concentrated the display in House 2, and what a sight - “LIKE NO OTHER”, as we say here in Taranaki.

Tuberous begonias were our main feature over the summer. They were a bit slow to start but they burst into bloom creating an amazing display. We purchased a number of new named exhibition tuberous begonias this season that have proved to be stunning. A local grower is selling his collection, so we will be adding more to ours.



Delwyn Masters, NPDC



Delwyn Masters, NPDC

Fernery staff spotted in the foliage:  
Judi, Jennifer and Donna

Mrs E.D. Schreiber of Inglewood donated 36 *Disa* orchids to our collection and they were admired by all visitors, especially those from South Africa, who commented they had never seen such huge flowers.

As winter approaches our winter collection of plants is starting to unfold.

Keep up with Fernery visits as there is always something to excite your senses or you will see something that you have never seen before.

## Canopy conundrum

- what would A.B. Scanlan have said?

Monkey Puzzle or Chile Pine, *Araucaria araucana*, are taking hold on the slopes of the High Level track behind the TSB Bowl. They grow to 30 metres and will eventually present a very different backdrop and ‘feel’ to the Scanlan Lookout.

Monkey Puzzles are a member of the Araucariaceae family as is the New Zealand Kauri, *Agathis australis*. Sap-lines go back to Gondwanaland!



Karl Rossiter