

# The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park

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*Friends of Pukekura Park  
New Plymouth*

*Photo Derek Hughes*

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**Another old Camellia identified**

**David Medway**

Jack Goodwin became Curator of Pukekura Park in 1949. He recorded that, in the early 1950s, he had measured “a few” of the Camellias in the Park. He found that, at that time, there must have been 50 more than 12 feet high and with a spread of 18 feet or more (*New Zealand Camellia Bulletin* 2(4) (1961): 6). Unfortunately, no record exists of the identity of most of the Camellias included in Goodwin’s survey but the large old-fashioned *Camellia japonica* cultivar that is prominent at the southern end of Sunken Dell beside the outlet to the main lake may have been one of them. This healthy plant flowers prolifically throughout a long period from early June until late October.

I mentioned in an earlier article (*Supplement to Newsletter of Friends of Pukekura Park* 2(2) (October 2007) that it is not possible to identify most old *Camellia japonica* cultivars, even given that they have been named, without reference to the early illustrated Camellia literature, some of which is now available on the Internet. After researching the most relevant of this early and later literature, I am satisfied that the Camellia in question is a specimen of the old cultivar *Camellia japonica* ‘Triumphans’.



*Camellia japonica* ‘Triumphans’ beside main lake outlet

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*Camellia japonica* 'Triumphans' originated in Belgium and was first validly named in 1833. The following description of it by Berlese in *Monographie du genre Camellia* (1837) is taken from the English translation of that work (*Monography of the Genus Camellia* 1838: 72): "147. *C. Triumphans*. - Leaves two and a half inches wide and three long, roundish-oval, slightly acuminate, nerves very distinct, a little undulated towards the middle, thick, very like those of the 'Colvillii'; bud spherical, depressed at the summit, and as large as a small walnut, before it expands into blossom; scales calycinal, large, thick, rounded, of a yellowish colour; flower three and a half inches in diameter, very full, regular, cherry-red, No. 1, gradually shaded with a pure rose, whose intenseness diminishes from the circumference to the centre; petals large, a little recurved at the exterior extremity, imbricated gracefully, slightly veined with red and rose; sometimes the petals of the centre, which are small, are striped with white. - *Magnificent*". The accompanying painting of 'Triumphans' appeared as Plate 104 in Berlese's *Iconographie du genre Camellia* (1841-1843).



*Camellia japonica* 'Triumphans'  
from Berlese (1841-1843)

The source of the Park's specimen of 'Triumphans' is not known, nor is it known when it was planted but it is obviously of considerable age. A flourishing specimen of this cultivar, planted at Mangapouri mission station near Te Awamutu in 1834, was still present in 1960 (Durrant *The Camellia Story* 1982: 46-47). I do not know if it survives. In 1960 there was another fine specimen in Cambridge which was subsequently removed to make way for commercial development (*New Zealand Camellia Bulletin* 14(3) (1985): 19).

It is possible that other old specimens of 'Triumphans' still exist elsewhere in New Zealand but have not yet been identified as such. In any event, because of its identity and probable age, the Pukekura Park specimen of *Camellia japonica* 'Triumphans' is a notable plant in its own right.



Flowers of *Camellia japonica* 'Triumphans'.

*Photos David Medway*

## Weta Hotels

John O'Sullivan

It was in October 2010 that The Friends, through their Volunteers, began to help establish habitats and plantings which would encourage insect life into the educational area of Brooklands Zoo. As well as planting Swan Plants for Monarch Butterflies, an area was also created to show the sort of habitat which might encourage occupation by Wetas. Since the initial creation, the whole area has developed and is now both an attractive and educational resource. It was therefore no surprise when last year The Friends received a further request, this time for assistance in setting up Weta Hotels. The request was agreed to and plans were made. It was initially thought that such hotels were available in kit form similar to flat pack self-assembly furniture. Therefore, an appeal was made to the membership for assistance in assembling the hotels once they were purchased and delivered. The response was very supportive but sadly the information we had was wrong. Weta Hotels were not available in kit form. We did, however, obtain plans from a research project undertaken by Otago University on the construction of Weta Hotels. It became clear that a high degree of skill plus some sophisticated power tools would be required.

Just as we were about to cancel the project a phone call from our member Ray Jury raised our hopes. He had a fully equipped workshop and offered to share it with any members who might want to assemble the kits. When he learnt that the task was much more complicated than we had first thought his response was "Okay. Give me

the plans and I'll build them. How many do you want?" We had a number of meetings to plan what and how to bring the project to a successful conclusion. Ray first built a full size prototype. This enabled him to identify and solve any design problems. It also meant that the prototype could be taken to the Zoo where Eve Cozzi and interested staff could examine it and make any recommendations. It was agreed that three hotels would be built with a fourth half-size model which could be portable and useful as a teaching aid. Ray also did much research to determine the right materials to use. Treated woods would probably deter if not destroy any passing Weta and even resinous woods might discourage occupancy. Once satisfied, Ray sourced all the materials and built the three hotels. For the half-size model he suggested that he use some of the wood which came from the notable Copper Beech which once stood on Brooklands Lawn and was destroyed in the gales of last year. It seemed a fitting use.



Ray Jury and John O'Sullivan erecting a Weta Hotel

On Thursday 29 March 2012 at 8.30am Eve Cozzi, Ray Jury, and representatives of The Friends walked the Zoo grounds to establish where exactly to position the hotels. Once agreed, a sledgehammer drove the post into the ground and the hotel body

## *From the Volunteers cont'd*



was then attached. Recent gales had damaged trees in The Gables garden which was consequently closed. The Volunteers, being unable to work in that area, went to the Zoo where they offered much encouragement like “It’s not straight”, “Move it further back”, and “The post needs to be deeper”. It must be said, however, that they also lent a helping hand in erecting the hotels.

Our thanks must go to Ray Jury who almost single-handedly brought this project to a successful conclusion. The *Taranaki Daily News* covered the story on the front page of their edition the next day. I am told that there was a large increase in the number of visitors to the Zoo on the following Saturday and Sunday. They certainly came to see where we had been.

Photos supplied by Eve Cozzi

Left. Ray Jury with a Weta Hotel

Below. The Weta Hotel team takes a break.



**Why there are so many Pohutukawa trees in Pukekura Park**

**David Medway**

The endemic New Zealand Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) is one of the most numerous planted trees in Pukekura Park, particularly on some of its boundaries and hillsides. For example, there are many large specimens of Pohutukawa beside Horton Walk, above the eastern terraces at the Sportsground, on the western boundary with lower Victoria Road, and on the boundary between Kunming Garden and Kauri Grove. These trees were planted in the 1920s and 1930s by Thomas Horton who was Curator of the Park from 1924-1949. In 1931, Horton explained why Pohutukawas comprised the “great proportion” of the trees he had planted in the Park to that date (*Taranaki Herald* 1/10/1931, p. 5):

“During my period at the park (over seven years) I have planted about 1200 trees, a great proportion of which are pohutukawa. Some people have asked the reason, and I am pleased to give it here. This is, if not our best native coastal tree, certainly one of the best. Many consider it one of the world’s best ornamental flowering trees. It withstands heavy wind, even gales, is not affected by salt spray, is evergreen, not so subject to disease as many other varieties, is easily controlled, responds readily to treatment, is free flowering and makes an effective breakwind; and, as it is a native, I consider it the most valuable tree to plant on the weather side of any park area which requires shelter and on the hill-tops. The only complaint made against this tree is that it is slow growing. That is quite true, when allowed to grow with grass and rubbish growing all around, as many people do, but with cultivation it is really astonishing how they respond and the wonderful growth they put on. Many of the trees planted in the park have made six feet of growth in five years, and would do even better if we had the labour to dig all the ground, instead of a limited area around each tree. There are trees in New Plymouth that have grown ten feet or more in three or four years. For these reasons I have adopted it as the most suitable tree for the purpose for which it has been planted. I think it unfortunate that this tree was not planted on the hill-tops of the park fifty or sixty years ago when the pines were put in. Had this been done there would be today a permanent body of growth on the hill-tops which might have been the special pride of the park and a pleasure to the whole community”.



Pohutukawas above the eastern terraces at the Sportsground

## From the Botanical Records Officer

Ian Hutchinson

The role of Botanical Records Officer is a newly-created position which I have been in since Easter 2012. The role came about as the result of a review in February, where a desire to establish a succession plan for the Curator Pukekura Park was set in place by creating an Assistant Curator role and a Botanical Records Officer role. This proposal was ratified and set in motion in March when my old role of Technical Officer was disestablished. An invitation was extended to express an interest in the new roles on offer. Subsequently, I expressed an interest in the Botanical Records Officer role for which I was interviewed and offered the job. I must say that I am finding this new challenge very rewarding and am very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Park in this way.

The main objective in creating the role of the Botanical Records Officer is to gain a better understanding of the significant plant collections that are held within Pukekura Park and to work towards recording these on an integrated database called BG Base which we will be sharing with the Taranaki Regional Council. This will allow us to become better aligned to our peer institutions throughout New Zealand. The Park's current plantings will be captured as they occur and I will then start to work retrospectively recording plantings from the past as well. In the longer term it is planned that there will be some collections outside the Park which will also be recorded and the information placed on the database, such as the community orchards and significant thematic or generic tree and shrub collections found in many of New Plymouth's reserves and walkways.

One of my first tasks has been to set up an accession book. This is where all plants that are going out into the Park and details about them are recorded, with the information ultimately to be uploaded to the database. The accession book has a series of columns, based on the fields used by the Taranaki Regional Council gardens (Pukeiti, Tupare, and Hollards) and the Auckland Botanic Garden, which record the following specific information about each plant: planting date, plant name, number planted, accession number, plant form, size, tag, source, provenance and the location planted. The plant name column gives the accepted and verified botanical name for the plant. The eight-digit accession number includes the year, which actual plant it is, and its place from being the first to last planted in any year, for example, for the first plant species or variety put into a garden in the Park this year the accession number is 20120001. The number will be a useful tool for tracking plants over their lifespan. The plant form column is information about what type of plant it is – such as, it is a plant, bulb, corm, etc – and the size column indicates the height or size at planting or the size of plant container. The source column indicates which nursery, other garden, or donor the plants have come from. The provenance column is for information regarding a plant's history or its background, which is particularly useful for plants that may have been collected in the wild. And, obviously, the location column is where the plant is actually



Photo David Medway

The Botanical Records Officer is dwarfed by the large *Sequoiadendron giganteum* near the Curator's office.

planted in the Park.

Another of my tasks, which is important preparation for the database, has been identifying and listing all the gardens and plant collections within the Park and collating the source list information we have. The gardens and collections have all been given a location code, for example, Fred Parker Lawn T4/PFPL, which is needed for one of the fields in the database, and also a brief description of the collection. The description for Fred Parker Lawn is: Ornamental shrubs, perennials, and cycads with a focus on general spring to autumn display. The T4 part of the code is the identifier for Pukekura Park and will relate specifically to the Park's place on BG Base. The nature of the gardens and collections is variable. Some of the gardens are purely for decorative display but contain collection plants within them. Others are generic, for example, Camellias, or thematic such as geographic collections, for example Chinese collection, and some are historical collections such as past Arbor Day plantings.

Along with the above, I have been working on the beginnings of a Plant Collection Policy and a suggested or recommended list of trees that may be suitable successional plants for replacements for some of the older trees going into the future. The tree recommendations are being made on the basis of suitability to the Park environment, botanical significance, and ornamental qualities that the plant may have. A Plant Collection Policy is a written document that acts as a practical tool that sets out the aims and objectives of living plant collections within a garden, and their management. This covers aspects such as the selection and collection of plants (Accession Policy), the process whereby plants are removed from collections (Deaccession Policy), how the maintenance of the plant collections takes place, and how these decisions will be made and by whom.

My new role has also included answering a number of enquiries regarding plants that we may or may not be holding within the Park collections, and helping David Medway with information for the significant plants database that the Friends of the Park are currently working on which I am certain will be a very valuable resource for the future.

**Addendum.** The Friends commend the New Plymouth District Council for establishing the long-overdue position of Botanical Records Officer with particular emphasis on the plantings in Pukekura Park. We also appreciate the appointment of Ian Hutchinson to that position. Ian is eminently qualified to fulfil this role by virtue of his considerable botanical knowledge and his long field experience in the Park. We look forward to working with him in his well-deserved new capacity. **David Medway.**



Photo David Medway

The Botanical Records Officer recording *Justicia aurea* at Hatchery Lawn.

## Park autumn update

Ian Hutchinson

Formerly Technical Officer Pukekura Park

The autumn planting program has been mainly focused on some replacements in the herbaceous border at Brooklands, and on revamp works on various borders and gardens in Pukekura Park.

The herbaceous border at Brooklands has just had some replacement plantings where some varieties have died and left gaps. This will probably take care of the border for this year other than compost mulching during winter to feed the plants and soil. We are trying *Polyanthus* as bedding plants again. With the change in the layout of the flower beds inside the entrance at Brooklands last year, where the soil was changed completely, it is hoped that we will again have success with *Polyanthus* after having problems with a Primula family-specific soil borne disease in the old beds. This meant we had stopped using *Polyanthus* as a bedding plant a few years ago. Here's hoping this has worked and given us back the ability to use such colorful and floriferous plants. The lawns at Brooklands have undergone a recent autumn renovation to help restore the lawn post-Womad and to thicken up and improve the quality and density of the grass sward. This should set them up nicely for next spring and summer.

The first gardens to receive a makeover at Pukekura Park have been those in and around the Bellringer Pavilion carpark. Here, the overhanging bush margin at the rear of the garden to the left of the Pavilion has been trimmed back to let more light in and to create some more space. The soil has been composted to give the existing plants plus the newcomers a better chance and some fresh food. Some of the plants such as *Strelitzia* and *Dietes* have been re-grouped together to create more unity. The newcomers in this bed are *Abutilon megapotamicum* and *Metrosideros bartlettii* a rare white-flowered Rata from Northland. There are two other *Metrosideros* varieties still to come: *M.* 'Tahiti' and *M.* 'Mistral'. The soil in the garden to the right of the Pavilion has also been composted. We have planted *Abutilon* to match the other side, and further *Philodendron selloum* to make more of a statement with this dramatic foliage plant.

In Primula Dell we have recently added some more *Primula capitata*, *Primula denticulata*, *Primula rosea*, *Primula viallii*, and Candelabra types that are hybrids between *Primula bulleyana* and *Primula beesiana*, which should have flowers in orange, yellow and red shades, to add to the potential spring display. Some

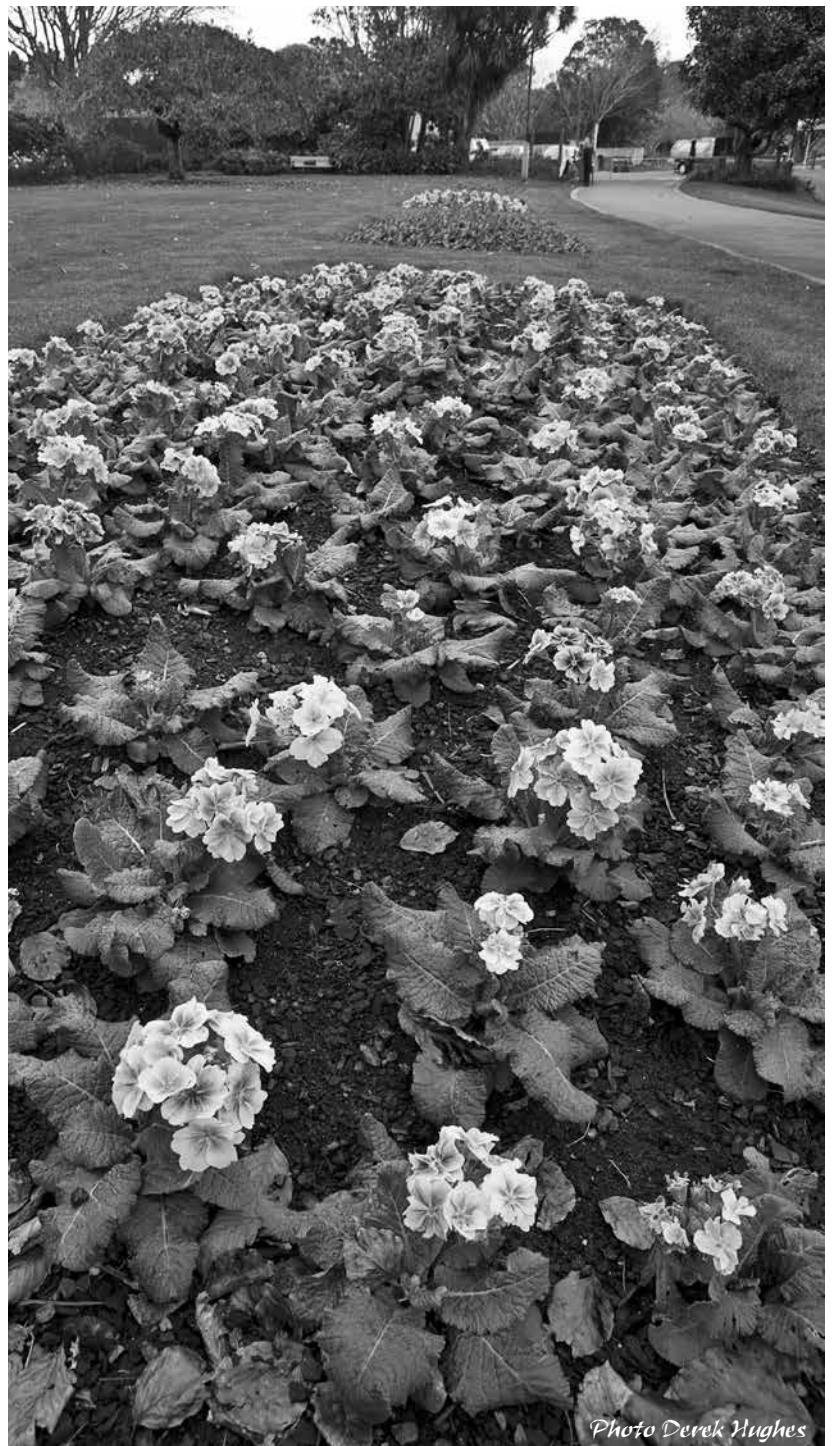


Photo Derek Hughes



*Primula denticulata* in the newly mulched and planted beds in Primula Dell

new *Hosta* varieties - 'Blue Angel', 'Francee', 'Golden Tiara' and 'Loyalist' - will also be planted in the near future. We have re-introduced *Neomarica caerulea*, a member of the Iris family which used to be in Primula Dell garden many years ago and has pale blue-lilac outer sepals and heavily purple-striped inner petals.

The loop garden at the top end of Stainton Dell is currently being renovated. The renovation has involved lifting and shifting some of the existing plants to different parts of the garden, putting them in conditions that will hopefully suit them slightly better, and also putting some of the taller plants further back so that the garden is not crowding in towards the path as much. A couple of view-shafts have been opened between the lily pond and loop garden so that you can glimpse into the loop garden from the path along the eastern side of the lily pond. The soil has been composted to boost it in preparation for replanting. New material will be planted in the near future to increase the collections and to add more interest to this area. The new plants will include varieties of *Aruncus*, *Astilbe*, *Hosta*, *Omphalodes*, *Primula*, and *Caltha* (Marsh Marigold). In the coming spring this part of Stainton Dell should be much more colorful, so think of casting an eye to the future and make sure you come and have a look.

Right. The view from the entrance to Brooklands over *Strelitzia reginae*

Below. Fresh plantings of *Polyanthus* in the Brooklands beds.



Photos Derek Hughes



## **The Monarch Butterfly haven at Brooklands Zoo**

**Anna Willetts  
Field Staff Zoo**

Over the past year or so, Brooklands Zoo staff have been working hard to build up and maintain the Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) haven. The Swan Plants (*Asclepias fruticosa*) have blossomed and the Monarch Butterfly population has flourished, and both children and adults alike have enjoyed the opportunity to see the different stages of the butterflies' life cycle. Every day, keepers are asked questions by children who want to know all about it. It's great to see the smiles and have so much interest from the public. This feature has proved to be a marvellous educational tool for the children, who spend a lot of time trying to find all the caterpillars and chrysalises. The Zoo's Monarch Butterfly population just keeps growing and next year there should be even more to see!

Some interesting facts about the Monarch Butterfly:

\* It is perhaps the best-known of the North American butterflies and has been found in New Zealand since the 19th century. \* It was nominated as the national insect of the United States of America in 1990. \* It has four life cycles - from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. \* Females lay several hundred eggs. \* When it is two weeks old, the caterpillar weighs up to 3,000 times as much as when it was born. \* It is the only insect that will migrate to warmer climates that are more than 2,500 miles away. \* It goes through four different generations each year, and only the fourth generation migrates. \* The fourth generation can live up to eight months, whereas the first three generations live only up to six weeks. \* Females have darker veins on their wings, and the males have a spot in the centre of each hind wing. \* Its wing span can be up to 10cm. \* It has a toxic chemical in its body called cardenolide from the plants which the caterpillar eats, and therefore it can be poisonous to many predators.



*Photo David Medway*

## W. W. Smith and the Monarch Butterfly

David Medway

W.W. Smith, who was Curator of Pukekura Park from 1908-1920, was one of the first naturalists to see Monarch Butterflies on the wing in New Zealand. Smith's records were the subject of notes in the English journal *The Entomologist* (Volume 25 (1892): 70 and Volume 26 (1893): 136-137), and of a letter published in the *Ashburton Guardian* on 23/5/1896 when Smith was Curator of Ashburton Domain.



Smith's letter to the newspaper included the following: "America is the native country of this beautiful butterfly, where its range extends from Canada to Brazil. Its geographical distribution is now, however, remarkable ... Its rapid distribution is keenly watched by naturalists in all countries, but its mode of dispersion is still an open question. It is, however, an interesting lesson in zoo-geography. The recent capture of a specimen in the Nelson district so late as May is strong proof that the *Danaus* is completely established in New Zealand. The insect is double-brooded – one brood appearing in late spring, the other in autumn. The Nelson specimen is the first one taken in autumn that I am acquainted with. The autumn brood hibernate and reappear late in spring, when the silk weeds or milk weeds (*Asclepias*) have grown sufficiently to enable the butterflies to deposit their

eggs on the leaves to feed the caterpillars. As these plants are now established almost everywhere in the colony, there is no reason, so far as I am aware, why the *Danaus* should not increase in New Zealand. In the meantime I leave the question of its origin in New Zealand for solution by your readers".

The Monarch Butterfly increased in New Zealand as Smith thought it would. No doubt he would be pleased with the recent successful establishment of Swan Plants for them at Brooklands Zoo, as is related in Volume 6 (1) (February 2011) of this *Magazine* and in the preceding article by Anna Willetts.



*Photos David Medway*