

The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park

Volume 9, Number 2
June 2014

*Friends of Pukekura Park
New Plymouth*



Photo Derek Hughes

This Magazine is made possible through the generous sponsorship of Graphix Explosion

www.pukekura.org.nz

<http://kete.pukekura.org.nz>

The Brooklands House

Adrienne Tatham

The fireplace relic we see today on the Brooklands lawn is the only remnant of Captain Henry King's old English farmhouse, described as "a pleasant villa" which was first occupied on March 29th 1843. No doubt it was built of native timber from the surrounding bush on the farm, as the evidence of a handy sawpit suggests. Captain King was New Plymouth's first magistrate. His property was seen as the "finest farm and buildings of any gentleman in the colony."



Photograph circa 1927

He and his wife's brother George Cutfield were the first owners of the 200 acre property, part of which we know today as Brooklands Park.

On 11th August 1860 during the Taranaki Land Wars Captain King's house was ransacked by the Maoris and was quite severely damaged, they broke into the house and destroyed everything it contained, pulling down linings and ceilings. They finally burnt it down on March 15th 1861, just four days before the truce came into effect at Te Arei bringing an end to the war. "Between 5 and 6 o'clock this morning dense masses of black smoke gave notice that Brooklands with outbuildings, barn, stabling etc was given to the flames. Not a vestige remains except the masonry of the chimneys."

The military policy at this time confined residents to living in the town area for their own safety, and the Maoris burnt down 187 buildings, one by one, while residents could only watch and wonder which home was being burnt. In February 1861 Captain King's only son was shot by the Maoris and a few weeks later another ambush occurred in the Brooklands peach orchard taking the life of 17 year old Edward Messenger.

After the death of Captain King in 1874, George Cutfield lived at Brooklands and when he died five years later the property fell into disrepair and in 1888 was finally offered up for lease or sale by the trustees of his estate. Thirty two year old Newton King, a well known New Plymouth businessman, took up the lease in 1888 and bought the property outright eight years later when the lease expired. He sold off half of the estate at this time. He made repairs to the Cutfield house, advertising for a builder on 20th August 1888. Later this residence was demolished and he engaged an American architect to design an elegant two storied home overlooking the pond which is now the Bowl of Brooklands. The building was begun and eventually Newton King and his young family moved in. The house cost 2000 pounds to build.

The house was built entirely of heart kauri, even the structural walls and the roof shingles were of kauri. It had a 12 foot stud and there was room enough to stand tall in the spacious attic. Balconies were incorporated on both stories of the house. It has been described as a magnificent high roofed home, the finest in Taranaki.

The main entrance featured a wooden door with stained glass inserts of differing colours. This opened into a spacious entrance hall about 9 metres wide with a beautiful staircase incorporating balustrades finely carved in oak leaves and acorns, each post being carved differently. All the panelled doors and architraves on the ground floor for the drawing room, dining room and library were carved in this way.

Contributions should be sent to

Friends of Pukekura Park, P.O. Box 484, New Plymouth 4340.

Magazine content editor: Adrienne Tatham. Photographic editor & designer: Derek Hughes

email: info@pukekura.org.nz web: www.pukekura.org.nz

The floor was heart kauri, it was a double floor with boards of each layer running at right angles incorporating a space in between the layers of the floor. This would insulate the home.

There were several rooms downstairs, a library, dining room and drawing room, all with fireplaces, and the kitchen and living quarters for the housekeeper. The large sitting room had wooden folding doors which closed off the library which was well stocked with books reaching from floor to ceiling. The dining room was equipped with a long table and leather chairs. It looked out on to the croquet lawn.

A large brass gong stood inside the front door, and this is the gong which Mrs King used to drag out to the verandah and signal her displeasure at the high school boys who punted the row boats about on the pond. The oars were always kept at the house.

Upstairs were five bedrooms, each one with a fireplace, the two largest being the master bedroom and the one allotted to the King's eldest daughter Olive. These two had access to the balcony. These bedrooms were large. Olive's bedroom was the one on the north-west corner of the house, directly above the 3.6 metre wide balcony. Other bedrooms were about five metres square.

The bathroom was huge and modern with an impressive shower over the bath. It had a variety of control mechanisms. Within the bathroom a ship's ladder was fixed to the wall, it led through a trapdoor to the attic. This area was roomy and had windows and a floor so it was built to make another working space which in the end was never used. At the end of the hall which ran the length of the building upstairs there was a small room which led on to an outside staircase in case of fire and this room contained a large toilet. At the back of the house beyond the kitchen gardens was a well which supplied the house with water by means of a pump.

It is apparent that this home was lived in and thoroughly enjoyed, and when Newton King died suddenly in 1927 his death brought about a lot of anguish. Time passed and probate was granted, but the money he had left to various reserves was not available, and the family decided that none of them had the means to continue to upkeep Brooklands. The trustees decided to gift it to the town in lieu of the grants. Eventually the council of the day accepted the gift, but were in a quandary about the building because there was not enough money to upkeep it. In April 1934 they considered different scenarios such as using it for an old people's home, a cabaret, kiosk or for the Plunket Society to use. A botanical museum was also considered, but the fire risk was considered too great for any arts works and in the end they decided to demolish it. Tenders were called and a Mr Medway accepted the challenge, which cost him 180 pounds. He was the bottle man who had a business in Gill Street with a muddy yard cluttered with old basins and baths. At the back of this section was a hut from which Mr Medway worked. He dismantled the house and sold it piece by piece. Boon Bros. bought most of the timber and some of it was used to build the State Theatre and the State Hotel in Devon Street East, and more was used to build several houses. The lovely staircase was put into a house in McLean Street, near Nob's Line, where it still exists. The house was finally dismantled by 1936. It has been said that it took six months to dismantle the chimneys.



Thanks to my cousin Vivian King, who supplied most of the information. Vivian lived for a time with his grandparents when he was nine years old. *References Taranaki Daily News, A.B.Scanlan.*

The Brooklands staircase
at McLean Street

Walk in the Park

Adrienne Tatham

7th May 2014. A bright sunny morning after rain made the plants sparkle. Sixteen people joined for a walk with Ian Hutchinson, Plants Records Office, for an informative walk beginning at Fountain Lake with the *Metrosideros fulgens* in flower there. Ian spoke as we went, and knowledge flowed even more freely when George Fuller joined in discussions and added more knowledge and stories so we were royally entertained on our wander through Palm Lawn, the playground and original gates at Victoria Road entrance, back along Hughes Walk to the waterfall, dam, band rotunda and drinking fountain where the trip ended. Ian's talks included plant names and stories, their provenance and probable planting dates and of particular interest were the stories which flowed such as the bicycle tree story about a kauri being moved between two bikes. Those who took part came away more knowledgeable and quite exhilarated after this walk. It took one and a half hours to traverse this section of the Park.

A WALK WITH THE CURATOR.

John Lovell

Fourteen of us joined Chris Connolly on April the first for an enjoyable hour's walk. He led us from the Bellringer Pavilion up to the *rhododendron* dell where he explained why some rhododendrons need to come out and be replaced because some are overcrowded and some are just too old. He also explained how some of the surrounding trees need some branches removed to let more light in to the *rhododendrons*. We walked up to the Brooklands entry to look down on the *rhododendrons* and Chris showed us where he intends to plant more bulbs on the western edge of the Bowl. On our way back down we saw the new planting of *rhododendrons* where old Pine trees had been removed. Chris also showed us a tributary stream which at times froths up with bubbles from an unknown source.



Photo Derek Hughes

Friends of Pukekura Park members with Chris getting an insight into the past and future of Rhododendron Dell.

Shags in the Park.

Val Smith

On one of his early guided walks for the Friends of Pukekura Park, David Medway drew his flock's attention to the colony of little shags, kawaupaka, nesting in lofty tōtara (*Podocarpus totara*) in the vicinity of the lower lake, their presence betrayed by guano-splattered foliage and footpaths beneath, and purposeful avian flight paths overhead, to and from their coastal feeding grounds. I was fascinated to learn of this breeding colony in the heart of the city.

However the preening bird I photographed on 24 March 2014 at the Teahouse boat landing was not a little shag (*Phalacrocorax melanocleucos*). Uncertain of its identity, I consulted local ornithologist Barry Hartley and learned that it was an immature black shag or kawau. Worldwide and in New Zealand black shags are widespread, but locally there are more little shags than black shags. From whence had the visitor come, and why? Perhaps ejected from a nesting site at Ngāmotu/Sugar Loaf Islands or Lake Mangamahoe or even Rotakare, had it dropped in for a closer investigation and/or rest while surveying new territory?

According to Gerard Hutching ('Shags', *Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 11 March 2013) there are 36 species of shags, known also as cormorants, worldwide. Twelve of these are found in New Zealand. They are grouped according to their foot colour, and of the four species of black-footed shag in New Zealand, the black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo novaehollandiae*) is the largest and most common, growing to 88 cm long from bill to tail tip, and weighing around 2.2 kg. It is found also in Australia and New Guinea. Another subspecies found in Europe, Africa, North America and Asia is reared and trained for traditional fishing in parts of China and Japan – with a noose around the bird's neck to prevent the catch being swallowed.

Black shags nest mostly in trees, but occasionally on rock ledges, on both coastal and fresh water inland sites, and feed on fish, crustaceans and invertebrates. They lay two to five blue-green eggs from June to October. The young fledge at about seven weeks, and are thought to live for up to 20 years. Their appetite for fish made black shags unpopular with anglers; between 1890 and 1940 acclimatisation societies paid a bounty on them and many colonies were destroyed. In 1986, after studies showed they made little impact on fish stocks, they were partially protected.

Compared with other seabirds, shags have less fat to insulate them. Their feathers are also less oily, and can become waterlogged, putting them at risk of hypothermia if they are in water too long. At the end of a fishing expedition they spread or flap their wings to dry and get warm again. The chance sighting of a shag in this characteristic pose is one of the many facets of Pukekura Park that keep drawing me back.



Photos Val Smith

The Legacies of Charles Score Sanders

Ron Lambert



Charles Score Sanders

From: Robinson, Alison: *The Ngaere Story*, 1982

In 1933 the *Taranaki Daily News* reported that well-known rhododendron enthusiast, Charles Sanders, had left “large and generous public bequests” to various Taranaki organisations. Among them were contributions to Western Park, Reserve “T” [later re-named Sanders Park], the New Plymouth Borough Council [for the Rhododendron Dell in Pukekura Park] and Stratford Hospital. In addition to these “large and generous” bequests, any residue from the estate was to be “for the purposes of such permanent improvements to Pukekura Park as shall be of benefit to the public.” (TDN 15 June 1933)

Charles Score Sanders was born in Marwood, Devonshire in 1851. His father came to New Zealand a few years later and the family followed to Nelson in 1860 where Sanders was schooled. As a young man he then spent several lean years on the Collingwood goldfields before buying, about 1876, a farm on Bristol Road, Inglewood – a district which was then still in standing bush. (TDN 15 June 1933/TH 1 June 1933)

His stay at Inglewood was brief as he soon sold up and went to join his elder brother, Henry, then a builder in Hawera. (TH 6 Sept 1935) Tradition has it that Charles, while walking south to meet him, was so impressed with a picturesque clearing in the bush at Ngaere that he later bought a 65 acre (26 hectare) block there. Henry¹ was apparently easily persuaded to buy a nearby block. (Robinson, A: *The Ngaere Story*, 1982)

It was about 1881 when Charles resolved to develop part of the farm as a garden – and what was to become Ngaere Gardens was established. Assisted by a local lad, Arthur Walker, he began by digging a lake, often at night by the light of kerosene lamps. After a decade of development Charles and Henry went to the United States for a year accompanied by Walker, then returned to set up a flourishing fruit tree nursery on the Ngaere land. (TDN 15 June 1933)

In 1912 Sanders left Ngaere² and moved to New Plymouth where he bought land in Westown. Here he created a house and garden – *Dartmoor* – which was described as “one of the finest gardens in the district.” (TDN 15 June 1933). Charles’ specialities were rhododendrons and waratahs and he was considered an authority on these trees which became a feature of *Dartmoor*.

After his death in 1933 a proposal from the Westown Progressive Association to re-name the upper end of Belt Road as Sanders Avenue was at first rejected by the Borough Council. (TDN 19 Sept 1933) The re-naming was, however, eventually agreed to in November that year (TH 7 Nov 1933) and the council’s Reserve “T” became Sanders Park. Nearby Dartmoor Avenue preserves the name of Sanders’ property.

Sanders’ bequest of £350 for the Rhododendron Dell was used, on park superintendant Thomas Horton’s advice, to establish the present Rhododendron Dell in Brooklands rather than to develop the smaller, confined Dell – then in Pukekura Park itself. Aply assisted by Sanders’ friends Arthur Walker and Victor Davies, Horton proposed buying some rare varieties in the United Kingdom. (TH 2 Sept 1933) Several of the Sanders-inspired *Rhododendrons* planted in 1934 still grow in the Dell and have been supplemented by later plantings.

In June 1937, £1500 of the ‘residue’ of the estate was allocated by the Borough Council for a new Liardet Street entrance to Pukekura Park. (TH 8 June 1937) The gates were designed with two pylons in an imposing neoclassical art deco style by Victor Griffiths³ and Raymond Syme of the architectural firm of Griffiths and Syme. (ARC2011-

¹ Henry Sanders – probably assisted at times by Charles – built the Ngaere Hall in 1886. (Robinson 1982) It is one of the oldest surviving rural halls in New Zealand

² It was the later owners, Albert and Jessie Truelove, who transformed Ngaere Gardens into the well-known tourist magnet of the early 20th century with a zoo, water chute and paddling pool around the lake.

³ Griffiths was also New Plymouth Mayor from 1927 to 1933.

083) It was proposed that they be faced with Mt. Somers stone but the tenders for using stone were all above £3600 – far more than that available. The architects then proposed “what was called waterproof stone with a tinted plaster finish, marked out and pointed to resemble stone.” (TH 13 Oct 1937) They assured the committee that “this would give identically the same finish as the Mt. Somers stone.” Committee member William Short – the local monumental mason – argued vigorously for maintaining the stone facings but the tender of Boon Bros for £1575 was eventually accepted. (Pukekura Park Committee Minutes, 12 Oct 1937⁴)



Sanders' Gates – 1939? - WD.053115

This is the earliest known photograph of the gates – a copy of a somewhat battered c1939 print. (Note that the present bronze plaque at the right-hand gate has not been installed and that six attachment studs(?) may be seen on the left side where the plaque has been removed for amending(?))

The new Liardet Street gates were completed in 1938 however....

.... in an enigmatic 1939 committee minute, a sub-committee was given the authority “...to submit a report as [to] the names of the benefactors who should appear on a plaque at the main gates....giving attention also to the removal of all names other than that of the late G.S Sanders on the plaque already erected.” (Committee Minutes, 21 Feb 1939) Further equally enigmatic minutes over the following months suggest that the plaque was cut down in size to remove the names of other donors added without authority. This does help to explain the somewhat strange difference in font size of Sanders' name and also the unusual placement of the attachment studs on the present bronze plaque at the gates. The amended plaque arrived in February 1940 and was installed soon after. (Committee

⁴ ARC2003-862, Puke Arika Collection

Minutes, 13 Feb 1940)

The new gates replaced the smaller wrought iron ones presented by Robert Hughes (Robert Clinton Hughes' father) in 1890. Part of these earlier gates is now at the Victoria Road entrance to the park where they were erected in 1940. (Scanlan, A B: *Pukekura*, 1978)



1890 Hughes Gates - about 1896, ARC2003-859/3

And so horticulturalist Charles Score Sanders' name and "large and generous" bequests live on in both Pukekura Park and Westown.



Sanders Gates Plaque

1938 Sanders Gates in 2013



Tour of the Park

A group of nine Auckland friends were met at the Bellringer Pavilion at 3.30pm on Friday 4th April by Heather Allen and Adrienne Tatham for an arranged tour of the Park. They had allowed themselves a whole hour in which to discover our Park and its history. Given the time of day we immediately introduced them to the mysteries of the Fernery, then quickly walked them to see the Golden Tree on the Boatshed Lawn. It was unbelievably shiny in the bright afternoon sunlight. The Bowl was the next stop and up the grass hill we led them as far as the Brooklands Chimney before turning back, with a brief inspection of the Gables and Chinese Garden area. We came down the western path by the lake and showed them the newly renovated Band Rotunda and the Victoria Drinking Fountain, then had a brief look at the Fountain Lake before returning them to their van – an hour and a half later. Fortunately this group was fit enough to match the speed of the two trampers who guided them on the day and were full of holiday spirit and humour. They did enjoy themselves and vowed to visit again for WOMAD next year.



The group photographed next to “The Golden Bearing”, an art installation by Reuben Paterson, an enticing feature on the Boatshed Lawn until July 27th.



Camellia 'Crimson King'

Brunfelsia undulata 'Whitecaps'

Photos Derek Hughes



Autumn 2014 Update

**Sheryl Clyma
Assistant Curator Pukekura Park**

THE DROUGHT IS OVER.

The gardens, gardeners and ducks can all breathe a sigh of relief the drought has broken. With the long awaited rain our autumn tasks in the Park have started. The Park is looking very refreshed after a long period of dust and even the lawns are greening up and recovering.

The summer bedding performed well over the drought, the beds up in Brooklands were a mass of colour. We utilised the *Heuchera* 'Palace Purple' as an instant colour border in filled with alternating beds of *Geranium* 'Maverick Violet' and *Geranium* 'Maverick Orange'. To give a bit of height this summer we planted standard roses. The *Heuchera* are a perennial and have since been replanted in the Fred Parker driveway border underneath the *Vireyas*, and the standard roses will also be relocated.

The bedding in the raised beds at the teahouse currently still remains; here we had planted *Impatiens* 'New Guinea Divine Scarlet', with a 'Divine' mix planted around the borders of Fred Parker lawn.

With the arrival of the rain we were able to proceed with the seasonal changeover of bedding, up at Brooklands the beds have been planted with Iceland poppies and here down at Pukekura we have used *Primula* 'Zoom' mix.

Plectranthus have been a feature in the Park; once again they are reliable bush line colour. The *Plectranthus* thrive in difficult shady positions and have an abundance of flowers in autumn and early winter. Although frost tender most species will survive severe frosts when planted beneath trees. We have *Plectranthus ciliates* growing, this forms a dense mound along the bush margins, flowers are white with purple specks, the foliage is also showy with purple underneath the leaves. This species can be very rampant and needs to be cut back and kept under check. *Plectranthus ecklonii* is a higher grower pink flowered variety and *P. saccatus* has large mauve-blue flowers.

Lawn renovations are now under way; the main playground will have grass seed sown to freshen up the drought-crowd trodden ground. Main Brooklands lawn will be cored and re-sown.

Ahead of us leading into winter we have the job of putting the herbaceous borders to sleep for the winter, the canna beds will be lifted, divided and replanted along with the dahlias. Some perennials are still flowering- check out the perennial *Ageratum houstonianum*, *Salvia cacaliifolia*, *Salvia confertiflora* and *Isoplexis canariensis* located in the Fred Parker Border.

It seems that the seasons come by very fast, once again the *Camellia* 'Crimson King' is flowering well inside the Rogan Street Entrance and autumn will soon turn into winter. Please come for a walk and see the *Brunfelsia undulata* 'Whitecaps' flowering in the garden leading to the old curator's office. They are flowering late but are a mass of sweetly fragrant tubular shaped bridal white flowers.

Happy gardening, tick the autumn jobs off your list and sit back and enjoy the upcoming season.



Fernery & Display Houses

Donna Christiansen

Technical Officer Fernery and Display Houses

Primarily we are here for visitors to come and marvel at the plant displays and collections but the venue itself is a wonderful place to integrate other events. In late September we had a classical guitar duo, Guittara, playing in the Tropical House on a Sunday afternoon and this attracted a number of visitors, some of them had not been here before. The success of this has prompted Guittara to come back on Sundays 2 pm – 3pm during May, so come along and hear them play. In December we had the opportunity to show case two large custom stainless steel sculptures one in the Annex, the other in House 3, these creating yet another element for our visitors to experience.

We are always trying to find ways to attract more visitors here and with technology playing an important part in keeping people informed Judi Lee has been adding a weekly update of photos, points or plants of interest via the NPDC Facebook page. The numbers of people viewing this is increasing by the week, 518 views last week, take a look.

Pukekura Park was offered the opportunity to be given a large collection of approximately 800 Fuchsias by Pat Wilcox of Living Light Nurseries. This collection was originally collected and a large number bred by Doug and Rita Profit of Brois Street in New Plymouth. Their garden was packed with fuchsias and in the season you could go and visit and purchase plants. When they moved from there the collection was given to their daughter Lorraine Agate and she started to propagate and sell commercially. Pat purchased the collection and sold Fuchsias commercially for a number of years and a few years ago closed the nursery. Pat approached us at the Fernery to see if we would be interested as so many collections just disappear and named varieties and species become lost forever. Pat and the local Fuchsia Society have been propagating cuttings of all the plants and are giving us lovely named,

small plants, to date we have 385. We then pot them on and catalogue the plants on to a database and try and

find room for them (that is the hardest job). Fuchsias have always been an important display plant and we have a collection of 300 plants flowering from October to May. They perform well in the lower houses so adding more varieties will enhance our displays and be of great interest to the public.



Photo Derek Hughes