

The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park

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Photo Derek Hughes

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Refreshing-Presenting-Maintaining

**Sheryl Clyma
Assistant Curator Pukekura Park**

Summer time in the park is a hive of activity, with visitor numbers swelling due to the array of entertainment provided, such as the Festival of Lights, Summer Scene and Cricket. This provides a set work direction for the staff based on maintaining the park but also presenting the park each day refreshed and ready for the next influx of crowds.



Some of the ground staff's tool selection ready to keep the sportsground in perfect condition.

Well before the summer crowds come through the gates we have the Arboriculture team come through the park to assess the health and condition of trees. Paying particular attention to the areas where crowds will be gathering such as the Hatchery Lawn, Fred Parker Lawn or the route that the Festival of Lights follows. With high winds we do a daily check to make sure there are no hangers waiting to fall down on unsuspecting public. MJF lighting, the lighting contractors, had a frightful reminder about the hazards of trees while installing features on the bridge. A large Cornus decided it would crash down across the path not far from their van blocking main track access.

As mentioned in my first paragraph the park has been a hive of activity, this relates to the wasps as well. This year staff have been kept busy attending to wasps, already since the beginning of January we have had to control 24 wasp nests. Seven of these were all disposed of in one day. Unfortunately the vibrating music coming from the

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stages, entertaining happy crowds brings the wasps out of their nests in swarms. One poor concert goer was stung seven times.

Each morning the staff set out to refresh the park, this involves the removal of rubbish left on tracks and scattered along in the bush. Also the re-raking and refreshing of the tracks and the checking for vandalism. Unfortunately there are a small minority who wish to spoil our park; it is still a regular trick to pour dish wash liquid into the waterfall resulting in copious amounts of foam.

The Festival of Lights route takes in the fernery this year, with crowds walking through the fernery at night. This also results in the staff in the morning having the priority of refreshing and replacing displays, damaged plants, re raking tracks. We the staff are very grateful for the Friends of the Park who are volunteering their time to assist with monitoring the crowds in the fernery at night. We are sure this directly results in less damage and fewer stolen plants, a big thank you to you all from the fernery and park team.

It is exciting to see our Jewel in New Plymouth's Crown being utilised and appreciated by a wide variety of the public, it makes all the Refreshing-Presenting-Maintaining a rewarding career for the staff



The Soma Cube
A Festival of Lights attraction in the Fernery

Photos Derek Hughes



Lynn Bublitz and George Mason - two long time park supporters and members of the Friends - monitoring the Festival of Lights crowds.

Now that another year has begun it is perhaps timely to do a quick recap on 2013 and certainly the latter part of it.

The Pukekura Accession Book records show there were 285 new plant accessions last year. All the information about these accessions has been entered into BG Base. There are some plant table entries still to be completed and these are reliant on some seeds which have still to germinate and some azaleas that were in front of the Tea House during the winter that need to re-flower so that I can work out what the varieties are in the locations they have been moved to.

Those of you who have visited the revamped children's playground will have noticed some more tree labels made for us by Metal Image in Auckland. These labels were part of a third order of labels which will cover the western side of the park, Stainton Dell and Eastern Hillside. They are designed to help visitors identify the different trees and hopefully make their experience even more enjoyable.

However not all the labels we had made last year have gone up yet because we ended up with more labels than mounts but we have now had more mounts manufactured which will enable the labelling to continue. The mounts had to go to the Hard Landscape team to have the nail hole opened fractionally. They have worked on them in and around their work schedule and they are now ready so I will be able to start putting up labels from the second order, which largely covers Brooklands plus the remainder of the third lot of labels ordered.

The Camellia quest that I embarked on last year relating to the collections of Camellias in the park has been successfully completed with only a few mysteries left to solve. It has resulted in capturing lots of good information about the collections and what we have here in the park.

Other collections I have looked at in regard to varietal identity are the older mature Rhododendrons in both Primula Dell and List's Garden. With the help of Graham Smith, past curator of Pukeiti, I have now been able to identify and name these plants. I have also worked on identifying Magnolias in the Rhododendron Dell, some of which were unlabelled at the time they were donated to the park in 2002. As a result of researching them while they were in flower it has enabled names to be put to the trees in question which of course will help when it becomes time to recording them on the Database.

During October I had the enjoyable task of working with Rob Tucker on his book about Pukekura Park, which has since been released. I spent a day with Rob going around the park capturing images of plants that are found within the park, including some of the less common plant genera and species. Following on from the photographic session I then helped Rob with botanical names for the photo captions in the book.

Lastly I have created a planting timeline similar to the park history timelines that we have. The purpose of the timeline has been to show significant planting dates and developments at a glance. I have posted a copy of this on the notice board in the Curator's Office so the information is accessible.



Left: Ian Hutchinson
35 years at the park.

Right: A piece of the
park history timeline.

...main gate for crossing the cutting, through the hedge in front of a
main gates, all the spoil was used to help fill in the swampy area that
today's sports ground.

1883 Mr Newton King leases Brooklands from the estate trustees.

1883 April 24 J T Davis makes a proposal for building a bridge(The Poets Bri
Using some of the winnings on the horse The 'Poet', that won the Auckla
Autumn Handicap sweepstake of 1883

June 18 J T Davis offers to erect an iron bridge across the upper end of t
from any design approved by the Board

July Barclay's design accepted

August 7 Tender from Hooker and Campbell accepted

1883 November 19 work started on building **Poets Bridge**.
The lake was lowered to allow foundation work to begin

1884 February Bridge work completed.

1884 March 11. At 7pm 1st Poets Bridge opened by the Mayoress Mrs Bayly.
September Grass seed sown on the Cricket Ground
Original cast iron double entrance gates donated for the 'Rec' as the Recn
Grounds were known. (these gates are now to be seen at the Victoria road



Above & left:
Installing the Weta
Hotels at the Zoo

Minding the Fernery during the Festival of Lights



Right:
The buggy and
two of its drivers



Above: Plant sales
Below: Raring to go!



Above: Weeding and planting daffodils at the Bowl lawn

Below & right: The Gables garden makeover



The Volunteers

John F. O'Sullivan (volunteer)



The Friends of Pukekura Park was established in 1996 their objectives, in broad terms, guardianship and promotion of the park. Soon many of the members felt they wished to offer more practical and hands-on assistance. After discussions with Park Management it was agreed that a group of members, to be

called "The Volunteers," would be welcome in the park to undertake designated tasks.

The initial induction needed the input of Health and Safety. This required The Volunteers to be assessed on their knowledge of Health and Safety hazards. The group assembled in the park to receive their guidance. The question to identify the possible hazards as they stood by some trees elicited the answer of "Tripping over roots." The respondent was then verbally chastised for failing to identify the tree branches as another hazard. The rest of the induction was carried out with a distinctly frosty atmosphere.

Before The Volunteers were allowed to work in the park they had to agree to two conditions; 1) They would only undertake tasks as designated by management; 2) They were forbidden to speak to park staff. These conditions were in all probability based on the suspicions that seem to naturally follow when the amateur enters the field (or in this case the park) of the professional. The Volunteers, however, did feel somewhat undervalued as most were keen and highly skilled gardeners and many were also qualified horticulturalists.

Thursday 9.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. was the appointed Volunteer time and a fair number turned up full of enthusiasm and keen to start. They were issued with brushes and told to sweep the paths. It is not surprising that this task, reminiscent of a Dickensian apprenticeship and continuing for some time, disillusioned many. Eventually the recognition by management that they had a ready, willing and knowledgeable workforce meant they might be able to address the areas of the park which were almost being overrun by such pernicious weeds as Wandering Jew and Onion Weed. As well as the weeding tasks some work was also undertaken in The Fernery and a number of beds and borders were improved by volunteer attention. The Fernery and volunteers also combined to grow plants for a successful plant sale which was held on the Fred Parker lawn. The monies raised went to buy horticultural books for a Park Staff library.

Over time The Volunteers and Park Staff relaxed in to an easy and friendly partnership, on occasions even combining their efforts, as in the replanting of the Brooklands borders. The volunteers had become a peripatetic garden unit visiting many areas of the park and undertaking a variety of remedial and replanting tasks. As they turned to look at their completed work one Thursday the group agreed "You can certainly see where we've been." There was still, however, a feeling that their skills and knowledge were not being fully utilised, a fact that was recognised by park management. From this developed The Gables project.

The Gables once had a well maintained 1900s front and back garden but it required high maintenance such as constant deadheading, weeding and pruning. With limited numbers of park staff, management were finding it increasingly difficult to schedule enough time to its upkeep. The Volunteers were asked if they would work with Ian Hutchinson (the then Technical Officer of The Park) to take it on as an ongoing project. The volunteers were pleased to agree to the challenge.

The front garden was first to receive attention. Much kneeling and weeding, cutting back and cutting down, lifting and shifting of plants and planting of new stock. The herb garden was then cleared and stocked with plants sourced from The Friends membership or purchased from their donations. The studio garden at the back had been much neglected and a bout of serious digging was required before much headway could be made. A mild expletive from one of The Volunteers drew attention to the fact that their garden fork had pierced an underground water pipe. This led to a three-way discussion; 1) on the stupidity of laying a pipe so close to the ground surface, 2) on the

From the Volunteers cont'd

superb maintenance of the fork, so sharp, as to create a perfect puncture point and 3) the possibility of leaving it as a water feature. Ian Hutchinson thought we should call the plumber so common-sense prevailed. In November 2009, at the end of the first year of development a Gables Gala was held with morning tea, attended by Park Staff and Management, Friends, Volunteers and with a ceremonial planting of three Agnes Roses by Agnes Brabin. Since 2009 The Gables has been an ongoing project of both maintenance and development but The Volunteers still have a roving commission. Standing at The Bowl in spring and looking towards the steep bank below Jellyman Walk a splendid display of Daffodils will be seen. Between one and two thousand Daffodils have been planted there. Not all The Volunteers participated in this challenge. Only those with a cavalier disregard for life and limb. The more sensible occupied themselves with dead-heading and leaf raking. During The World Cup, The Volunteers worked on the borders of the Fred Parker Lawn deadheading and weeding which freed up the park team to attend to the surrounding banks.

Not only have The Volunteers given practical assistance in The Fernery but they and many of the membership have given much evening time to stewarding The Fernery during World Cup and Festival of Lights. A role by which visitors from around New Zealand and overseas can be welcomed to enjoy one of the finest glasshouses in the country if not the world.

Brooklands Zoo has also benefited from Volunteer help. A request to assist in developing a Wildlife exhibit which would run along the fence towards the children's swings resulted in the purchase by The Friends, of a number of Swan Plants. One Thursday morning was then devoted by the Volunteers to creating the Monarch Butterfly Border plus the construction of several other wildlife habitats. The Friends also bought materials for the construction of Weta Hotels. These were then skilfully designed and built by a member of The Friends. Another Thursday morning found The Volunteers identifying areas likely to appeal to Wetas and installing the "Hotels."

Smaller in number, but no less important, are the Buggy Drivers. The Buggy is an electric people carrier which can be booked by parties and follows approved circuits around the park. The Council have purchased the vehicle and The Friends operate it by providing drivers. The service is free but, if visitors wish, donations can be made to Friends of the Park, all donations going to promote park projects. Initially the service was conceived to assist park visitors who had mobility issues but it is now frequently booked for weddings, birthdays and other celebratory occasions which people wish to hold in the park.

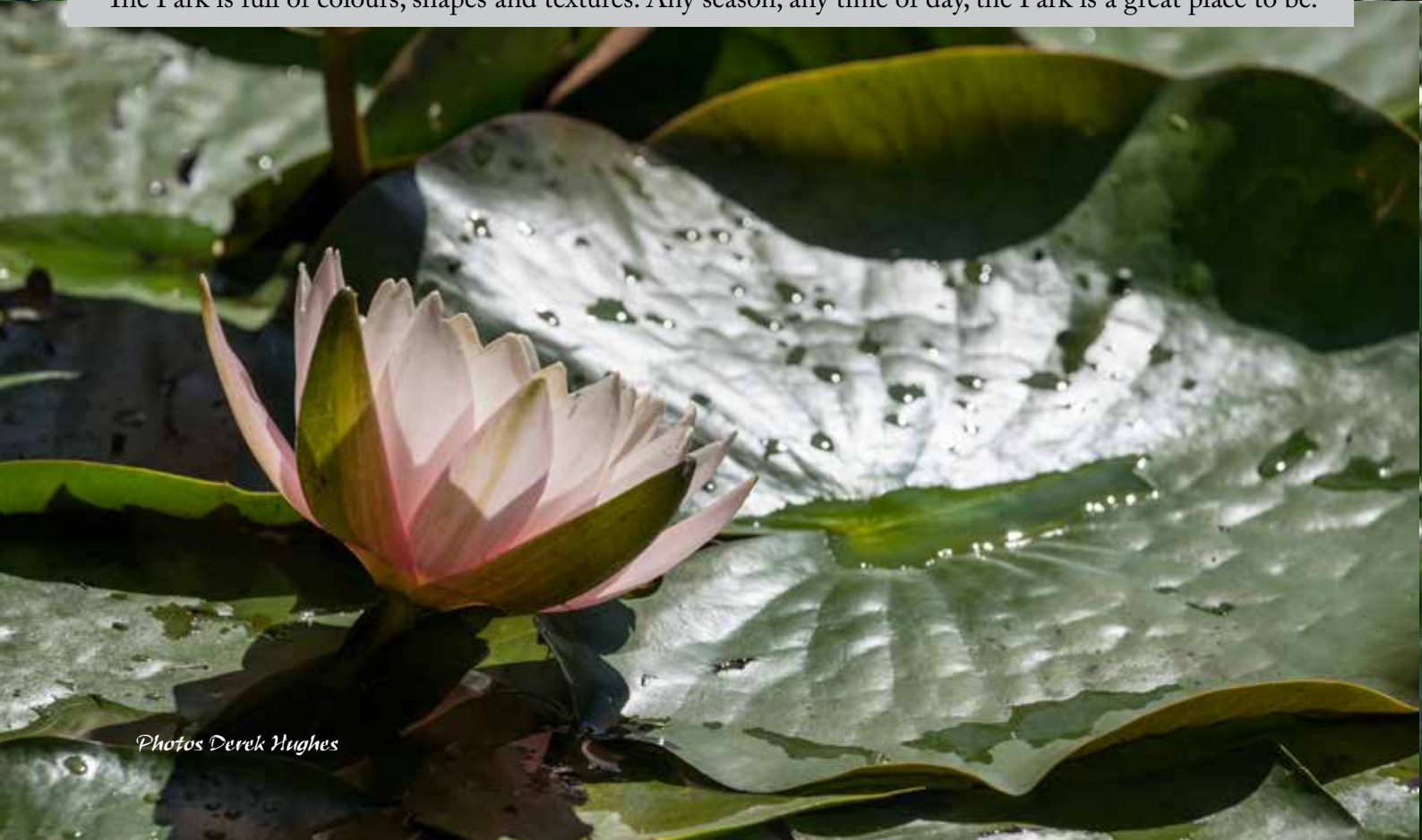
One of the most significant events on our and the park staff calendar is in mid-June. The Friends and Volunteers hire The Bellringer Pavilion to lay on The Mid-Winter lunch for park staff. Some of the catering is bought in from Le Dejeuner but most of it is generously provided by the membership. It is a highlight in the park staff calendar and is our way of saying thank you to the staff as we share making Pukekura Park "The Jewel in the Crown."

Since 1996 a lot has happened especially as a Volunteer. Much Agapanthus and Onion Weed has been dug, many roses deadheaded and pruned and a Camellia Hedge moved from one side of The Gables to the other. As the work has progressed, family issues have been aired, political observations made and the medical profession has been either praised or condemned depending on its success at keeping the body mobile and/or pain free. At the end of a Thursday session as The Volunteers pack up they glance at the area they have been working in and then wend their way through the park towards their cars. Whichever path they take "They can certainly see where they have been."





The Park is full of colours, shapes and textures. Any season, any time of day, the Park is a great place to be.





From the Zoo (see next page)
Red-Wing Parrot and King Parrot
newcomers to the free flight aviary



It's a man's world.....

**Anna Willetts
Keeper Brooklands Zoo**

Over the past few years, Brooklands Zoos free flight aviary bird population had proven to be a challenge for the zoo team to manage with many serious aggression issues between the different species during the breeding season. For this reason the decision was made to change the display to an all male or 'bachelor' group to eliminate these problems as generally speaking without any females around the male birds get along just fine. Male birds are also often the more brightly coloured of the sexes so make a more interesting, vibrant visual display.

We have now successfully removed all the female birds and re-homed them to local bird breeders or to other zoos. Now with all the females gone the numbers of birds were obviously lower and so over the past few months we have slowly been bringing in new birds to add to the free flight display. When a new bird (or any animal for that matter) comes into the zoo they have to go through a quarantine process of at least 30 days to make sure they are not bringing any disease into the zoo which could be passed to the other birds already here. For these new birds we processed faecal tests for worms & avian TB as well as a feather test for Pbfd (psittacine beak and feather disease). Once these tests have all returned clear or negative they can enter the main collection.

The new comers to the free flight are;

- * The Princess parrot, named after Princess Alexandra of Denmark, it has beautiful coloration of pink, blue and greens. They have a variety of different calls.
- * The King parrot, large in size, have a bright red body and neck with dark green back and rump. They like to socialise with the other birds.
- * The Red winged parrot, they are hard to miss with bright green body, crimson red wing coverts, a black back and a stunning flash of blue under their wings. They are very active.

We hope to add more new species to the free flight in the future. Come up to the zoo and see!



Princess Parrot

Friends of Pukekura Park are first and foremost people who love Pukekura Park, Brooklands Park and the associated bush Reserves and wish to safeguard the special character for future generations.

Festival of Lights
Fernery Minders

15th December 2013 – 25th January 2014
8.30 pm – 10.30 pm

Twenty seven people, two at a time, were involved in supervising the traffic through the fernery on almost every night, the exceptions being Christmas night and one very wet night. Some evenings were really busy with constant queues of people shuffling through, many with prams and pushchairs. A few disabled people in wheelchairs accessed the area from Horton Walk, against the tide of one way traffic. Other evenings were quieter, with time to admire the plants. Thousands of people must have passed through in those few weeks.

A few members of the public were quite disruptive, some pushed barriers aside to access prohibited areas, others touched the sculpture with one man trying to dislodge it, others touched or picked flowers and some entered other glasshouses in spite of the "Staff Only" notices. One lout even attacked a roller door, bouncing it up and down, frustrated that there was a further barrier beyond it. It surprised me to see how many pushed the boundaries.

As minders, we were grateful that Staff had organised the coned parking spots in Rogan Street and supplied the high visibility vests which gave us some authority. As the event progressed some fine tuning occurred, e.g. Exit signs, and this made the job easier.

Each night many photos were taken and points of interest included the Soma sculpture, climbing lily, flycatcher plant and the begonias.

Our volunteers enjoyed their evenings there, some offering to do more duty. My personal thanks to all those who so willingly gave their time to the job in hand.

Adrienne Tatham.
Roster organiser.
28th January 2014.



If you enjoy Pukekura and Brooklands Parks as much as we (the Friends) do then we invite you to join.

While our main focus is to care for the park we are also a social group - monthly walks in the park, regular meetings featuring a variety of guest presenters, volunteer work in the park - all with a great bunch of like minded people.

Above is an example - Fernery minding - which we all thoroughly enjoyed.

We also welcome submissions of articles and photographs for this magazine to go with the informative writing we receive from park and zoo staff.

And, of course, feedback on what we, the Friends, do is always sought and welcomed.



Ancient but Elegant : Pukekura's Band Rotunda

Ron Lambert

£ 1 REWARD

I WILL pay the above Reward to anyone who will give information that will lead to the discovery of the person who wilfully damaged the Concrete Steps [of the band rotunda] now in the course of construction in the Recreation Grounds.

H. HOOKER

(*Taranaki Herald*, 2 April 1887)

A spate of vandalism at the park and sites around the district has the council scrambling to find a solution to stop further destruction. At the end of October an arsonist caused \$55,000 in damage to the children's playground after a \$560,000 makeover, the park's band rotunda has been attacked twice and displays being set up for the Festival of Lights have also been damaged.

(*Taranaki Daily News*, 12 Dec 2013)

Vandalism in Pukekura Park, it appears, is not restricted to the present!

Pukekura Park's lakeside band stand or rotunda would seem to be the oldest remaining in New Zealand and has a Historic Places Trust Category II classification. Since 1891, when it was completed, the elegant structure has been a key attraction for the park's visitors.

It was late in 1885 when the Recreation Grounds Board decided to build a band rotunda in the park. They intended to approach local architects "to supply gratuitously a plan capable of extension when funds permit." (*Taranaki Herald*, 17 Nov 1885)

Architect James Sanderson, presumably 'gratuitously', supplied plans which the Board then forwarded to the well-known Scott Brother's Atlas Foundry in Christchurch for an estimate for the decorative ironwork and pillars. (*Taranaki Herald*, 17 Nov 1885) Their reply, reported in June the following year, was not received with delight by the cash-strapped Board who then asked if the iron-work could be supplied in instalments. (*Taranaki Herald*, 12 June 1886). The Christchurch firm may not have agreed to the 'drip-feed' but they certainly did eventually supply the order - "Scott Brothers, Ch.Ch." is cast into each one of the eight pillars.

Amusements,
FORESTERS'
PLAIN AND FANCY
DRESS BALL
In Aid of the Band Rotunda in the
Recreation Grounds.
ALEXANDRA HALL,
Thursday, Sept. 2nd
UNDER the patronage of JAS. PAUL,
Esq. (Mayor), O. SAMUEL, Esq.
M.H.R., COLONEL STAPP, and MAJOR ELLIS
COMMITTEE : Bros. Dr O'Carroll, Dr Gibbs,
J. B. Roy, A. H. Holmes, S. W. Jackson,
Hooper, Robert's, Goldwater, Davis, 1 re-
main, Ramney, Arnold, Tribe, & F. Stohr.
Double Tickets, 7s. 6d. ; Single Tickets, 5s.
Extra Lady, 3s. 6d.
Dancing to commence at 8 p.m.
F. STOHR,
CON. SEC.

a301 h sp2

Advertisement for the
Plain & Fancy Dress Ball
Taranaki Herald 27 Aug 1886

Serious fund-raising got under way in September 1886 with a 'Plain and Fancy Dress Ball' hosted by the Foresters' Lodge and held in the Alexandra Hall - the predecessor of TSB Showplace. This was followed by a dazzling fireworks display around the lake which attracted over 1500 people and £10 10s of the proceeds was contributed to the cause. (*Taranaki Herald*, 22 Nov 1886)

Finally in 1887 the earthworks for the band rotunda were completed and Henry Hooker was contracted to construct the octagonal concrete base. (*Taranaki Herald*, 1 March 1887) and one of the first of many instances of vandalism in the park was recorded. The concrete base "has suffered to a considerable extent by having large portions of the unset mass stamped away." (*Taranaki Herald*, 2 April 1887) Hooker offered a reward of £1 for the 'discovery' of the perpetrators but it appears to have been unsuccessful (or unreported).

Lack of money constantly beset the Recreation Grounds Board but fund-raising continued through the following three years with a 'Fancy Fair' (1888) an 'Entertainment' (1889) and a 'Bazaar' (1890).

The Fancy Fair - arranged by the members of the Ladies Sewing

Committee - was replete with goods stalls, a refreshment booth and with two brass bands to supply music. There were also Punch and Judy shows, Aunt Sally, a greasy pole, a bicycle obstacle race and children's races among the host of attractions. (*Taranaki Herald*, 21 March 1888)

The Entertainment, or concert, and Bazaar were held in the Alexandra Hall with the bazaar raising a very creditable £70 for the project. By the end of 1890 the Board had begged, borrowed or otherwise raised sufficient cash to be able to finish the rotunda.

Arthur Mofflin - variously described as an architect or cabinetmaker - appears to have taken over the project from James Sanderson. "The band rotunda in the Recreation Ground, for the erection of which Mr Mofflin is now calling tenders, will be a handsome structure judging by the plans...". (*Taranaki Herald*, 22 Dec 1890) A month or so later the *Herald* reported that the 'iron framingwas landed from the *Takapuna* on Saturday." (*Taranaki Herald*, 16 Feb 1891) but the trials and tribulations of the 'Rec' Board were not yet over! When inspected, the ironwork was not to their specifications, so the Board was able to negotiate a very-welcome reduction in price.

By that stage the Board would have been panicking. They desperately wanted the rotunda to be available for the brass bands playing at the grand fireworks display planned for the 50th Jubilee celebrations on Taranaki Anniversary Day. And so it was that the *Herald* was able to record that "The band rotunda, which was completed the other day, was used by the bands, who found it a great convenience." (*Taranaki Herald*, 1 April 1891)

In 2013 Pukekura's band rotunda underwent a major restoration with the decorative finial being repaired and replaced, the roof and pillars cleaned and repainted, the concrete base re-plastered and electrical fittings renewed. During the refurbishment the iron pillars were found to be filled with charcoal powder to stop them rusting. (C. Connolly, pers. comm. 2014)

The toadstool-topped rotunda also has had its original 1890s red and white candy-striped colour scheme restored - a format that has not always been used in the past.

New Zealand's oldest band rotunda may have had a chequered beginning but it has subsequently been an integral part of the setting of the area around the tea house and lower lake.



The Band Rotunda about 1908
(With Mary, Ida and Wilfred Blanchett, New Plymouth, also
Rene and Grace Donald of Dunedin.)
PHO2002-883 Puke Ariki Collection

The Band Rotunda 2014
Twilight Fair in January



Park experience

Jasmine Lister

One of the jobs I have been working on is the plant catalogue for the Friends of Pukekura Park. The catalogue of arbitrarily-selected significant plants in Pukekura Park which was compiled by David Medway contains about 500 significant species and varieties of plants located in the Park including all notable trees as recorded by Smith and Fuller (2007), with the exception of several of their Kauri.

The catalogue contains a large amount of information which cross-references S.W. Burstall, *New Zealand Forest Service*, (1973), S.D. Medbury, *Plant Resource Scheme*, (1984-1986) and C. Smith & G. Fuller, *Notable Trees of New Plymouth*, (2007)

Every plant noted in this catalogue is added onto a plant list spreadsheet which records the following information: Map reference, family, genus, species, variety (if any), cultivar (if any), common name, origin and description regarding information on whether it has been noted by Burstall, Medbury, Smith & Fuller or any other references. The description also specifies its location on site, history and planting date (if any). For example:

Map Ref: 81

Family: Ericaceae

Genus: Rhododendron

Species: -

Variety: -

Cultivar: 'Sir Robert Peel'

Common Name: Rhododendron

Origin: Garden origin

Description: There are several large and healthy specimens of this cultivar in the Park of which the following may be noted here. Their planting dates are not certainly known, but they are clearly of considerable age. They flower well in July-August.

(1). Beside Fountain Lake, eastern side. A notable specimen that was recorded by Burstall (1973: 34), Medbury (1986: 16), and Smith & Fuller (2007: 195-196, Figs. 188, 189). It bears a new name-plate. This plant is referred to simply as "Rhododendron" being the 26th entry in a comprehensive list compiled by Thomas Horton in the late 1920s of plants "Commencing at right hand side of entrance from sports ground near lower lake and thence to Gilbert St gates" (Puke Ariki ARC2003-860, Box 3, Folder 28). This tree was probably planted in 1909 or 1910 by W. W. Smith, then Curator of the Park, when he was working on and planting out the Gilbert Street entrance and Smith Walk between there and the car park entrance to Fountain Lake (*Taranaki Herald* 7/9/1909, p.4; *Taranaki Daily News* 5/7/1910, p.2).

A programme called GIS (Geographic Information System) is used to pinpoint a plant's location on an aerial map of Pukekura Park with the addition of any other information. This is identified as the Map reference. David Medway and Elise Smith had marked the location of many significant plants



Jasmine at the base of a very large specimen of Rhododendron Sir Robert Peel.

Photo Elise Smith

onto several hard copy maps which is currently being added onto the GIS document. With the guidance of Ian Hutchinson and Elise Smith, it has been of great help identifying and locating plants that have not been marked, or have been mistakenly placed.

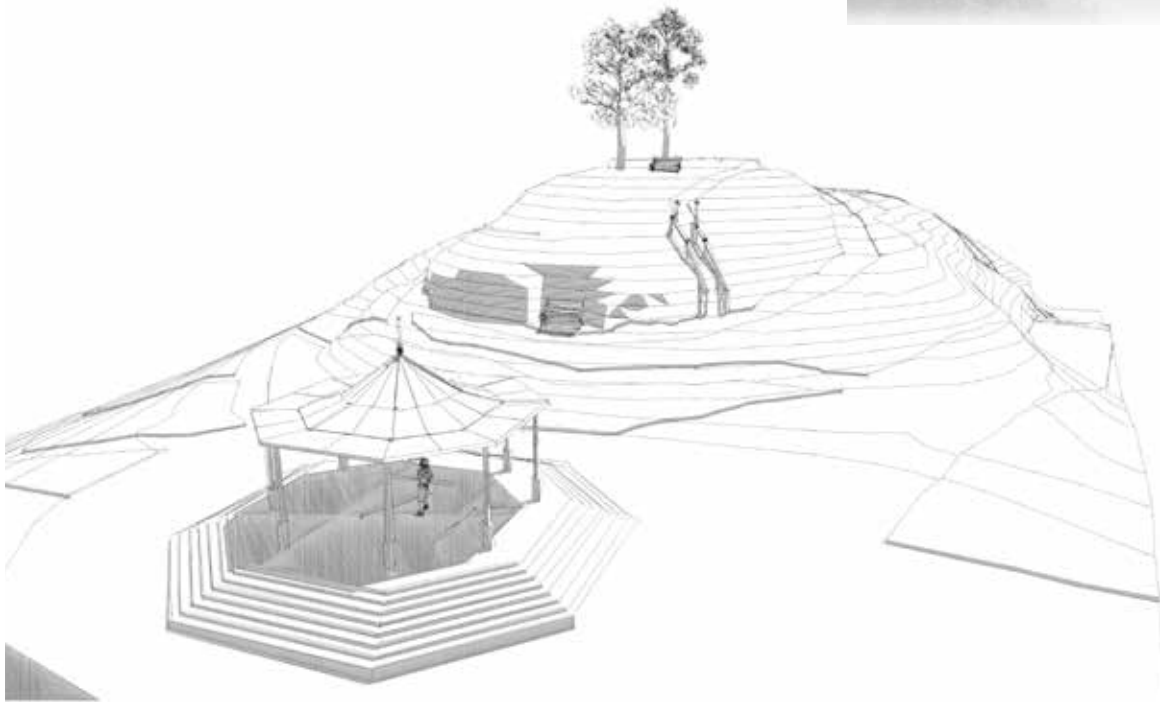
Working with these documents has been very educational. For someone who is new to New Plymouth, I find I am learning more about the Park's history and the significant plants, each of which tell their own story.

Another project I'm working on is a concept design for Cannon Hill. On the first day of my job, Ian Hutchinson took me for a guided tour around Pukekura Park. I learned a lot about the different garden areas and the historic events which had taken place. It was interesting to see the Park had a lot of history and I would like to depict that in the plan for Cannon Hill.

I look forward to seeing the plant catalogue finished and open for the public to use. I'm sure this will be a valuable resource in the future. Working in the Park has been very rewarding and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute in some way.



Contour map (right)
and preliminary 3D sketch (below)
of Cannon Hill



Jasmine Lister is a student who has been working in the Park this summer. She has completed a four year degree in Landscape Architecture at Auckland Unitech and has added work experience to that while she helped in the Park office.

Volunteer work at the Bifengxia Giant Panda research centre, China.

**Chris Connolly
Park Curator**

In May 2013 I had the opportunity to visit the Bifengxia Giant Panda research centre near Ghengdu, China. I was in China overseeing the building and planting of New Plymouth's sister city garden in the city of Kunming and had arranged my visit to the research centre prior to leaving New Zealand. I travelled to Chengdu by train and then bus to the city of Ya'An and then finally a taxi out to the Bifengxia research centre.



It had been my intention to work at the centre as a volunteer for a week but because of the distance and difficulty getting there I had to cut my stay to four days. The first day was spent signing papers, being issued with a uniform and generally kitted out for my work plus meeting the keepers in charge of the Panda bears.

When applying to do the work at the research centre I had indicated that I wanted to work with the Panda bears in the field and because of this I was assigned to the keeper responsible for a number of female pandas which were part

of their breeding program at the research centre. After a brief site induction, some instructions and a look around the holding facility I was introduced to a large female bear called The Kings Daughter, which I was to look after. My work started at 8am with cleaning out the two concrete cell like rooms the bear was kept in overnight. While I was doing this work the bear was outside in its own fenced off part of the forest where it was free to sleep and wonder around on its own. Once cleaned and dry the bear was allowed back inside.

My next task was to prepare her food and then hand feed her. The pregnant female bears are on a carefully managed diet which included bamboo, fruit, vegetables and a special prepared Panda Cake made with corn, oats, eggs and vegetables. Four hundred grams (400gms) of this cake was cut off and sliced into finger sized pieces and fed to the bear through the bars of the enclosure, a bit frightening at first but in spite of being very big and clumsy looking I was amazed at how careful and gentle these giants were. Each piece of cake was carefully taken from my hand in its mouth. The bear then removed the slivers of cake from its mouth and held it in one paw and consumed the cake in small mouthfuls with crumbs falling on its large, fat, rounded stomach. It reminded me very much of a messy old man eating a biscuit. This feeding exercise was repeated four times a day.

Today the giant panda is a conservation reliant, endangered species and in the wild they only live in six small areas in inland China. These are areas where forests of bamboo grow and the elevation ranges is from 4,000 to 11,000 feet. In the wild bamboo makes up to 95% of their diet, they eat 15 different types of bamboo. Because of their inefficient intestinal system the Panda must feed for 12 to 16 hours a day and will consume up to 40 pounds of Bamboo each day.

My time at the centre was a once in a lifetime experience and it would have been very easy to have stayed longer but I had other business to finish in Kunming.