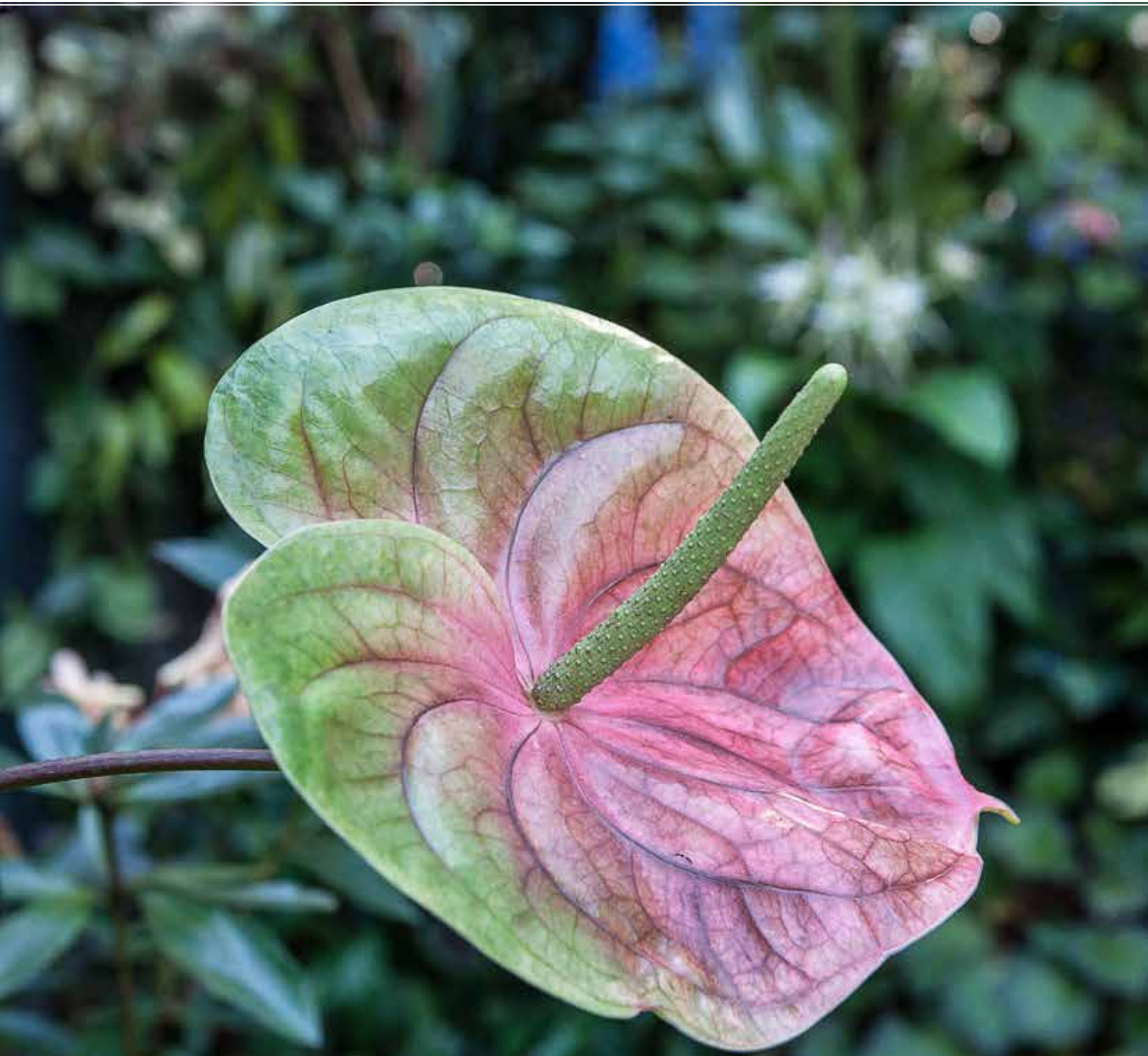


The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park

Volume 12, Number 2
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At this time of the year - don't forget the Park's little piece of the tropics in the Fernery and Display Houses.

Photo Derek Hughes

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The Queen's Fountain - and the Age of Enlightenment

Ron Lambert

Just after 11.00 am on 9 January 1954, the newly-crowned Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh, drove through the Sander's Gates onto the Sportsground of Pukekura Park. They were welcomed by, and introduced to, a fearsome array of local dignitaries watched by 18,000 Taranaki people including 5000 school children from the New Plymouth, Inglewood and Coastal areas. After driving around the assembled students in an open-top Land Rover, the royal couple took their leave of the park.



The royal visit of 1953-4 is, today, still remembered, if only for the tragedy at Tangiwai. But in New Plymouth there is a further, less horrific reminder.

John (Jack) Goodwin¹, who was employed as Parks Curator/Director in 1949, developed the concept of introducing colour to the park. His first major project was to be a fountain with multi-coloured water jets in the lower lake to commemorate the Queen and Duke's visit. The plan was quickly adopted in principle by the Park Board and Council. A recent bequest from Walter and Leah Graham – avid supporters of the park and former licensees of the Criterion Hotel – was to partially fund it, along with public subscriptions.²

Near the end of 1954, the removal of the island in the lake and the filling of the nearby lily pond with the spoil – now the Hatchery Lawn – had begun. At the same time, the first of a long line of critical or downright malicious letters began to appear in the *Taranaki Herald*.³ (ARC2003-859/2)

“Yesterday I was in Pukekura Park and was amazed at the condition of what was once an object of admiration to thousands of visitors – the lower lake.... The lake bed is just a dirty bog, the little islet has gone, [and] paths have been damaged by the traffic of heavy trucks....” (*L C Hughes*, TH 3 Dec 1954)

“It looked more as if a 10-ton bomb had been dropped by some lunatic. A bomb could not have made a worse mess of such a beautiful place....” (*“Anti-despoiler of Nature”*, TH 6 Dec 1954)

“I had heard of adverse comments about the proposed fountain and severe criticism of the damage being done with the object of getting the fountain there.” (*“Treefern”* 7 Dec 1954)

Others called into question the siting of the fountain....

“Is it too late, Mr Editor, to transfer the fountain to Ngamotu Beach where the setting would be much more suitable and where it could be seen by ten times more people.” (*S P Smith*, TH 10 Dec 1954)

Still others called attention to the probable need for more traffic officers to control the “hundreds of cars” and not-to-mention the extra police who would be required to restrain the “undesirables” that would find their way there.

1 John William Goodwin MNZM (1912-2005) Horticulturalist. Curator Pukekura 1949, Superintendent Parks 1950, Director Parks 1954-1977.

2 The Graham Bequest also funded the Park's Administration Office near the Sportsground.

3 Correspondents at the time were able to write over a nom-de-plume. They could therefore write, anonymously if they wished, with venom in perfect safety. It's a situation that has been re-established by our modern social media.

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: project@pukekura.org.nz web: www.pukekura.org.nz

There were a few vocal supporters, including engineer Alex Brodie, who had given his expertise for the project free-of-charge.

“I feel sorry for the unalloyed criticism levelled at the park committee and the discrete silence of the majority of our citizens who are, on the whole, tolerant and hopeful of the fountain scheme.” (*Alex Brodie*, TH 15 Dec 1954)

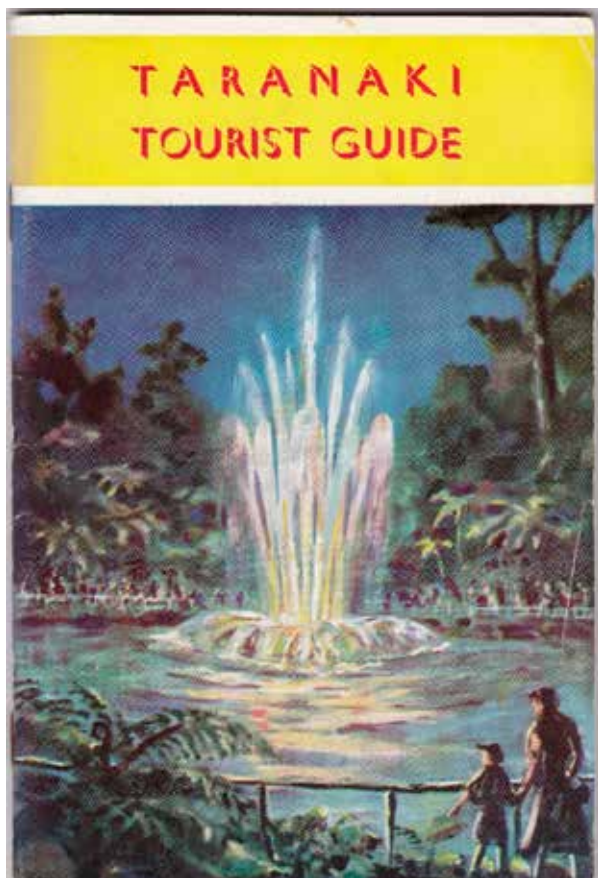
Pukekura Park Board Chairman – D F C Saxton⁴ - also replied to the criticisms

“Those people who do not like illuminated fountains will suffer no pain or loss. They do not visit Pukekura Park now at night, and the illuminated fountain will only be seen at night. (*D F C Saxton*, TH 9 Dec 1954)

In late December, and after a debate on procedural matters, the City Council gave the Park Committee authority to go ahead with the purchase and installation of the fountain. (TH 23 Dec 1954)



Photo Derek Hughes



Bernard Aris' "Artist's impression" of the Queen's Fountain, March 1955.
Taranaki Tourist Guide [1955-56]

The following year, Chairman Don Saxton and committee member, Eliot King, announced a proposed programme for opening the new fountain, as well as the printing of a coloured pamphlet seeking public subscriptions. Well-known artist Bernard Aris produced an illustration which “Mr Saxton pointed out was not a true one. It was based on verbal descriptions [of what the fountain may look like]...” (TH 29 March 1955)⁵

This led to a further torrent of irate “Letters to the Editor”.

Even the pamphlet generated its own outrage.

“May I crave space in your valuable paper regarding the gaudy pamphlet that was shoved into our letter box this morning” wrote *Non-subscriber* who continued the tirade. “Instead it filled me with disgust to think of the shocking waste of money and the destruction of the peaceful serenity of the park.” (“*Non-subscriber*”, TH 5 April 1955.)

4 Donald Frederick Clifford Saxton CBE (1900-1982) Journalist. Joined *Taranaki Daily News* in 1924, Editor 1933-62, General Manager TNL 1962-68. Chair Pukekura Park Committee 1948-68.

5 The writer does not recall ever seeing one of these pamphlets, although the *Daily News* reproduced Aris' "artist's impression" (TDN 29 March 1955) which was later used as a cover illustration on a *Taranaki Tourist Guide*.

A solitary cornetist was to perform an item from Cannon Hill and plans to include “a boatload of nurses to sing from the middle of the upper lake” was greeted with breath-taking disbelief. Somewhat unseemly suggestions from *Tainui Canoe* and *Here's Hoping* that the nurses would best be in swimsuits to attract people or that they “... should gambol in the fountain.” were endured with difficulty. The singing nurses and their boat appear to have been swiftly dropped from the programme!

Three nights before the official opening, a rehearsal was held before a scratch crowd of 4 -500 locals. The now-a-trio of cornetists, selected to perform “Little Sir Echo”, also practised their parts from around the lake. The Herald's reporter waxed eloquent on the fountain's display. “There were shades of magenta, violet, flame, gold, green, emerald, purple, ice blue, apricot and silver-white.” he enthused. (TH 7 April 1955)

On the evening of 9 April 1955 - Easter Saturday - before a crowd of “over 6000” the Mayor, E. O. E. Hill, addressed the gathering....

“Tonight we are here to inaugurate a new and, I think you will find, a truly great beauty which has been added to the many beauties of our park and city.”

Mayor Hill took care to remind the visitors of the many contributions, freely given to the project, by local firms including builders, electricians and plumbers. (TDN 11 April 1955)

Judith Saxton – the Chairman's daughter - then turned on the fountain “As a fanfare of trumpets heralded the display, impatient hand-claps and whistles gave way to choruses of approving “ahs!” from every side of the lake. Looking for criticism, reporters moved among the spectators, but they found it only with much searching.” (TDN 11 April 1955) The cornetists then performed their “Little Sir Echo” number.

Skins of coloured lights surrounded the Main Lake and Sonny Pratt's concert party, Hāpu o Rongo, performed from a line of nine boats on the lake. Pratt's Māori children's choir then presented song and dance items on the band rotunda steps. The New Plymouth City Band added to the musical pageant. Audiences at the fountain on the Saturday evening and the following two nights showed their approval by contributing £320 in donations. (TH 11 April 1955)

New Plymouth residents were to hear that the fountain and electrical equipment were designed by Turnbull and Jones of Wellington, that G T Payne was the local contractor and that the bowl was of reinforced concrete, 9ft 3in (2.8 metres) in diameter.

There was a total of 228 waterjets providing 14 different displays and 22 colour schemes and the main central jet reached up to 15 metres in height. Impressive indeed!

And so, notwithstanding the hostile correspondence, Jack Goodwin's “illuminated fountain” of multi-coloured jets took the Taranaki public by storm and led, eventually, to the social phenomenon of Pukekura Park's annual Festival of Lights.



The fountain is also very popular with the local ducks.



Photos Derek Hughes

From the Display Houses

In the wet and cold of winter the Fernery and Display Houses are very welcoming. A bit of warmth, colourful and beautifully presented.

Visitors comments say it all!

Pukekura Park - a garden for all seasons.

ADDRESS	COMMENTS
Konkeni Tasmania	Almighty, so beautiful!!! just. or usual.
NGATIMORI	Beautiful
Santa Cruz CA	Fabulous!
SAMOA	Beautiful!
FRANCE + MAURITIUS	Very good SUBPLANT
Australia + France	Really display standing hours!
New Plymouth	Lobe by 101
New Plymouth	Absolutely Amazing much needed
New Plymouth	So beautiful!!!
down the road New Plymouth	Way flats pretty good
Awhitu NZ	Cool climate, creepy spider just stunning
OAKUCA	AMAZING
Tubingen Germany	So relaxing
New Plymouth	Always so beautiful
New Plymouth	Beautiful... but missing the
New Plymouth	Maori Medicinal garden
Rotorua	Amazing chun
Glasgow, Scotland	Beautiful #goals
29 Hobart DRIVE NP	ELP...



ADDRESS	COMMENTS
NZ	Beautiful!
PO1	Wow!
Orange Kent UK	Really cool!!!
Gold Coast Australia	Nice
Sunshine Coast Australia	Gorgeous
N.P	Misc
Carlisle Cumbria England	Amazing
New Plymouth	Great location
Arrowtown	my Dad worked here for 10 yrs and my cousin is beautiful
	looks Great
	Really beautiful plants
	So peaceful! Beautiful



Photos Derek Hughes

ADDRESS	COMMENTS
New Plymouth	Amazing
Auckland	Love it feel like plant
OTP	Prize goes to xxx
Northcote Auckland	Awesome
Whangarei	Fabulous
East coast	Amazing
Auckland	Gorgeous
Manukau Auckland	Level
Petone, Well plan	Beautiful
Toi Nomu Upper West	So lovely
Australia	Beautiful Thanks
Thames	Wow!!!
Nairanapa Whangarei	THANK YOU!!!!
Palmerston North	Amazing
Wellington	Beautiful breath-taking
New Plymouth	lovely displays - not usual!
New Plymouth	lovely plants
New Plymouth	Awesome plants!
New Plymouth	cool park
New Plymouth	Thank you
New Plymouth	for it X X
New Plymouth	Amazing!!

Pukekura Park – Living Science

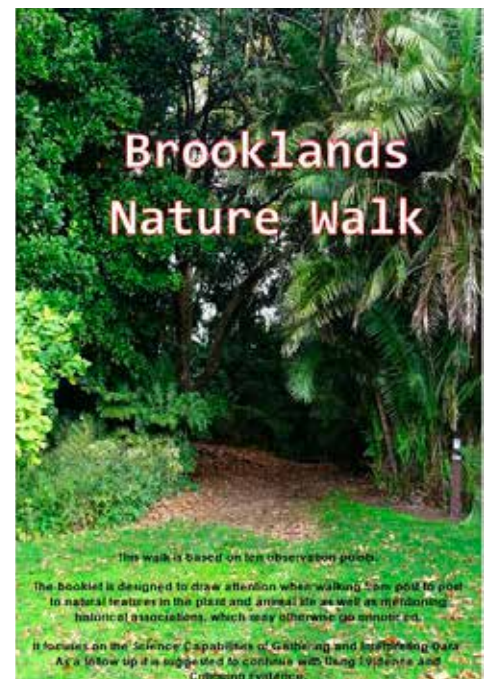
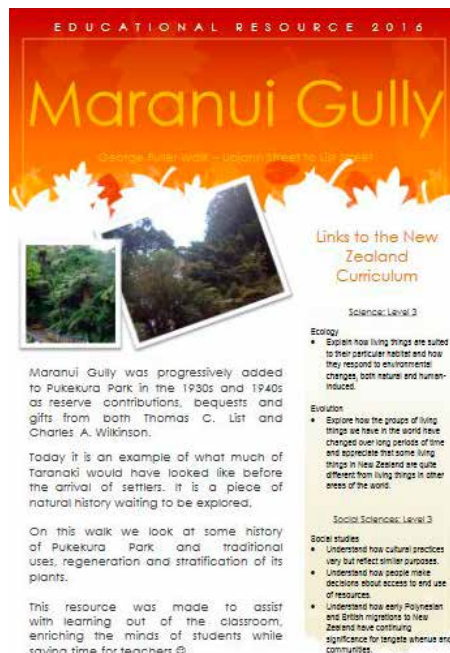
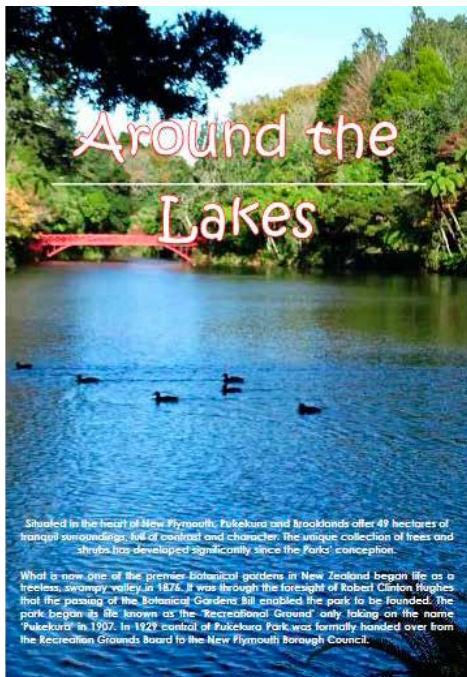
Elise Smith

In 2008 the Friends of Pukekura Park was awarded funding by the Department of Internal Affairs, to digitise and map the plants and history of Pukekura Park. We now have a considerable archive of digital material, including the papers and images from George Fuller, and our carefully researched magazine articles. David Medway's book on the 500 'Significant Plants of Pukekura Park' and the update of Burstall's 'Notable Trees of New Plymouth' by Cory Smith (assisted by George Fuller) are matched to a map showing the details for 2,200 plants.

We needed easy access to these historic resources and plant information for specific walks in the Park. So together, the Friends and MAIN Trust NZ worked on "Pukekura Park – Living Science", funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment. This is a "Curious Minds" education project promoting the engagement and use of technology. We have had tremendous help from two teachers participating in the Royal Society 'Science Teacher Leadership Program', Leesha Clark (Matapu School) and Brent Dunnet (Spotswood College). They helped develop three teaching resources. Leesha provided the pedological guidance to link the primary school curriculum and suitable educational material to our walks.

You can see the three visitors' resources on the Friends website www.pukekura.org.nz and our "Pukekura – Living Science" Facebook page with interactive maps and booklets to read online.

- Walk around the Lakes and Fernery, looking at the history of Pukekura Park, the main buildings, features and significant trees. Excerpts from the Friends' magazines are used to provide historical context.
- The Maranui Gully, in the Park behind Highlands Intermediate School. This is particularly useful for schools or those on a nature ramble, seeing the native plants in the deep bush and finding out about ecology and plant uses.
- The Nature Walk, starting from Brooklands Zoo takes a circuit through the Park, looking at features in the Zoo, in native bush, some introduced trees, history, and changes that occur over time.



Pukekura Park Recollections

David Walter

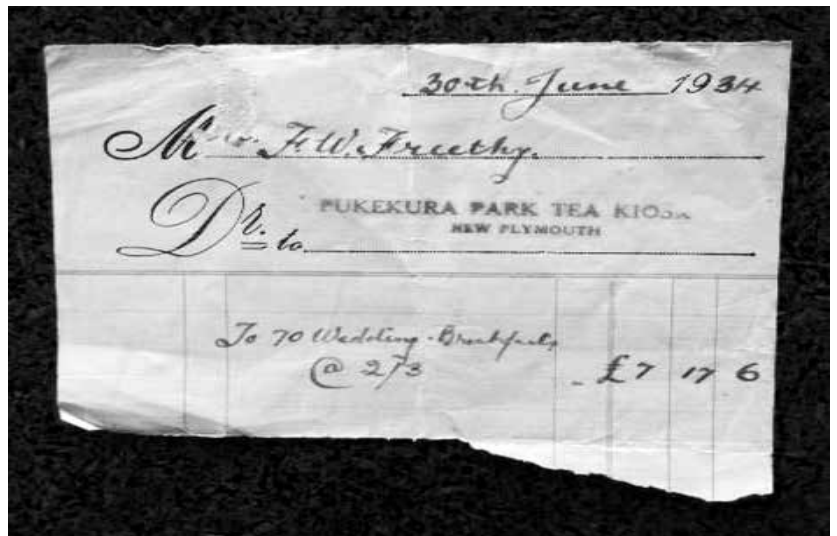
My maternal grandparents Fred and Anita Frethey lived on an 8-acre property directly south of the Victoria Road and Holsworthy Street corner between 1919 and 1944. They built the house named 'Bonavista' around 1920, which is still standing, though obscured from the road frontage by other houses. The lower part of their property bordered Brooklands Road, where the Truby King Azalea Dell is now located. The small lake there was originally dug out by my grandfather with shovel and wheelbarrow.

Fred Frethey was the brother of John, who created the Frethey Gardens in the Frankley Park area. Both were actively involved in the ongoing development and maintenance of Pukekura Park.

1934 wedding breakfast at Kiosk

My mother, also Anita Frethey, married Douglas farmer Ernest Walter on June 30th 1934. The wedding reception was held in the Pukekura Park kiosk on what was claimed to be the coldest day of that winter.

The cost of the wedding breakfast was 2s.3d. for each of the 70 guests, a total of just under £8. The wedding cake cost £2 - Anita's wedding frock cost £5 (we still have it!)



Pushed in the Lake

About 1949 our family was in the park by the base for the row-boats. There must have been some dispute between myself and younger brother Neil, the result of which saw me shoving him into the lake (we'd have been aged about 9 and 6.) He was quickly hauled out spluttering and bellowing, while I became the recipient of some instant and painful physical retribution from my parents. Even a couple of onlooking strangers added to the verbal remonstrations.

NPBHS and the Park

During the 1950s weekend leave for the boarders of Carrington House in NPBHS was generally granted without question for two specific locations – Port or Park. The park was an ideal place for mooching about, finding enough cover to smoke cigarettes, or watching any sport being played on the ground. As well there were some enticing orchards up by the racecourse bearing plentiful fruit just waiting for mouths to eat it.

The park also provided a meeting place for some of the city's errant youth, at the time known as 'bodgies' or 'teddy boys'. Around the late 1950s a call was issued to the boarders to issue 'summary justice' to stop these local louts harassing younger pupils in the park. A vigilante group was quickly formed and the entire boarding establishment took off to witness the retribution.

Near the lake the first few boarders were met by the bodgies, whose leader stepped forward and invited the pupils to tell him what the problem was. One of the boarders was a powerful Samoan scholarship pupil, Tele Te'o, who strolled up to the leader of the pack, smacked him in the face and then shoved him into the lake. He then invited the bodgies to put someone else up against him. They didn't, and the harassment thus ended.

Almost all the boarders walked through the park on the way to the city's various churches every Sunday morning. Some of the more courageous tended to duck out of the mandatory church attendance by simply disappearing somewhere in the park en route - they were commonly known as the 'Bush Baptists'.

During the 1950s when secondary school boys were taught Military Drill, NPBHS cadets used the sportsground often for parades and fieldcraft. A lesson in concealment was to lie boys on both sides of the ground by the railings, proving that given the slightly raised middle area it was impossible to spot those lying on the opposite boundary.

When the fountain was installed in the bottom lake to commemorate the visit of the Queen and Prince Philip, high schools pupils helped in various ways around the muddy site. As well the school provided working bees around the mid-1950s when new tracks were developed on the upper eastern slopes, including part of the Saxton Walk.

Cricket

The Pukekura Park sportsground has rightfully been acclaimed as one of the most picturesque cricket venues in the world. During the 1950s to the 1970s thousands would pack the terraces to view matches featuring international teams. An Australian side in 1957 that beat Central Districts contained prominent players Richie Benaud, Neil Harvey, Bobby Simpson and Norman O'Neill.

A decade later in 1967 another Australian 'B' team was beaten in an unofficial test match with New Zealand on the park. Crowds again packed out the terraces. NPBHS pupils were allowed out of school early to watch the international matches. Another memorable encounter was when an English team tied (a rare event) with Central Districts in the 1977-78 season.

Around this time concern was expressed about trees above the western terrace shading the pitch during the last period of play. Suggestions were made that the offending trees be cut down, but fortunately any such action drew criticism and was never carried out.

The introduction of one-day cricket in the 1970s and 1980s brought a different crowd and atmosphere to the area as distinct from the traditional game. Around the same time alcohol booths were set up, resulting in some noisy and boorish behavior later in the day. Restrictions eventually placed on alcohol consumption were monitored by the police, though the relatively sedate crowds of previous decades were just a memory.

In the Bellringer Pavilion are two mounted cricket balls used by Taranaki representative bowlers who set records for the number of wickets taken in a match. Coincidentally, both lived in the small East Taranaki district of Douglas. Ernie Cole took 15 wickets early in the 20th century, while former All Black lock Alan Smith took 16 in 1964. Cole was born in England, and was both the Douglas storekeeper and a farmer, while Smith came from a Douglas farming family - he played for the strong Douglas senior team that won the provincial championship in 1970.

The House by the Zoo.

Adrienne Tatham

Newton King had two houses for his men on his property, other than the Gables and during April 1913 they were together valued at 400 pounds. The Gables at that time was let at 10s per week. Mr King had put in the water supply at his own expense and was liable for the water rate. The town drainage system, gas or electric light had yet to be extended to the property.

Vivian King, who is now 101 years old told us that he used to stay with his grandfather at Brooklands and that his uncle Waldyve King then lived in the house which is situated by the Zoo carpark. Vivian then aged 10 years old used to go and visit his uncle at night to listen to the newly invented wireless.

Family history tells us that Waldyve was born to Mary and Newton King during 1888 and that his head was severely damaged by a horse kick when he was in his late teens. He had a metal plate inserted in his head and spent some time recuperating in the quiet atmosphere of Nukuhakare Station north of Awakino on the coast, which Newton owned. Subsequently he was employed by his father as chauffeur (Newton never drove) and lived in the house near the front gate to Brooklands. In due course he became a dairy farmer near Otorohanga. Newton employed several other men and relations to drive him.

Subsequently Parks staff lived in this house and I have been told that Alex Dent was one of these men. He was a gardener primarily at Brooklands but also worked in Pukekura Park. His daughter Noeline Tipler and son were living there when Noeline was about 8 or 10 years old, and they lived in this house about 1929. The house she described as warm and comfortable. The two children walked to Central School through the park and enjoyed playing in Brooklands Park and climbing the massive Spanish chestnut tree. They also enjoyed the company of Mr and Mrs Slinger who were long term tenants of The Gables. This couple had two house cows which they milked by hand and the children were fascinated and used to help. The cows grazed in the paddock which is now the Bowl.

Noeline's father Alex Dent one day arrived home ashen faced and locked his children up in their bedroom, as he had discovered the body of a small 2 year old boy with blond hair floating in the pond – now the Bowl lake. He had thought that there was a piece of plastic floating around. Obviously the children were to be kept out of the way while recovery processes were put in place.

This staff member also helped look after the park boats on Sundays, as several workers of the time did.

During the war Alex moved to the South Island where he was an instructor in the Morse code. He returned to take up a position as caretaker at Burgess Park and the family lived in the house there. He made steps up the steep bank behind the house, and erected a table and seats by the river so that families could picnic there and after a big flood he marked a big tree by the river with the tide mark. Noeline and her children were all married at Burgess Park for it was a popular wedding venue. But her brother who was a welder suffered from TB and was posted to a sanatorium at Waipukurau to recover. He was banned from returning to the house at Burgess Park owing to its being damp, so the family moved to Bideford Street at Brooklands and Alex became caretaker at Highlands School.

Another employee was Albert James, an Englishman from Lancaster whose wife was frightened of the peacocks and her husband kept an axe under the bed, so they must have felt at risk there.

Various staff members rented the house following this period and one of these was Tom Wagstaff who with his wife Shona lived there from 1955 until Christmas 1961. Tom was poorly paid by today's standards at 25/- per week, and the rent took a large proportion of this income. This couple had two children while they lived there, with another on the way. Shona worried about the children walking to school through the park on their own but a neighbour picked them up at the foot of Brooklands Drive. Their daughter Kim loved to watch the weddings which were held in Brooklands Park. Tom had a large vegetable garden at the house, and the area was riddled with *Oxalis*, which he gassed, a method employed at the park as well.

Shona said the house was comfortable apart from the toilet being located out the back, with a sloping ceiling. She and Tom redecorated much of it carpeting some rooms and they put transfers on the walls in a room they prepared for their babies. She mentioned having had a party one night and the kitten was so frightened by the noise it scampered into the fireplace where the fire was going and stayed on the ledge there until it was rescued.

Jack Goodwin the curator was overseas at the time the Bowl was being developed so Tom inherited the huge task of relocating the copper beech which now stands at the bottom of the hill towards the racecourse end of the Bowl. All the Park staff helped him with this job which turned out to be so successful. Tom also climbed a big tree so that he could take photos of the first stages of making the Bowl.

They loved the neighbours, the Slingers – Mrs Slinger had many cats, hens and a goat inside the house, the goat called Tammy was borrowed from the Wagstaffs and used to love looking at itself in the mirror in the bathroom. Her cows ate bamboo and slipped their calves.

Later the Park nursery was formed alongside the house and much later the zoo was built. Meantime, the lessee of the Tea House (Mrs Jensen) was a practical joker who used to make sandwiches with a gravel filling for Tom. Concern was expressed that a Peeping Tom matched Tom Wagstaff's description! Always there have been different men hanging about the parks, sometimes clad sometimes not and most local children were encouraged to beware of them.

For 10 years from 1962 Alan and Gael Jellyman resided in this house, Alan was at first assistant curator to John Goodwin, then he became deputy director and later director of parks. The fine *Backhousia citriodora* in this yard was well established when Alan came.

Years passed, then when Glyn Church and his wife Gail saw this lovely house situated in park surroundings they were enchanted and surreptitiously peeked in the windows while nobody was about. They coveted it. Having recently emigrated from England they were staying in a rental property on Octavius Place for a year. While awaiting the arrival of their car they explored the town on foot and in this way learned the park environs. This was in the late 1970's and Glyn was appointed to head all the parks in New Plymouth except Pukekura for the three year period 1978 – 81. Imagine their delight when they discovered the house they'd been allotted was the one they had so admired.



It was scheduled to be redecorated so they volunteered to help the decorators by hanging wallpaper. Having carried out this task they were devastated to find it hanging so loosely on the walls which were lined with scrim, but in the morning the paste had dried and stiffened and all was well.

One night during their time there they heard a group of people singing and couldn't work out just where the sound came from but upon investigation found twelve folk singing their hearts out on the Bowl stage, the footlights being provided by cars they had pulled up on the grass for this purpose.

Ken Davey and his wife Adrienne were others who occupied the house. It was alongside the nursery and Ken managed that area of the park. He spoke of two little old ladies being frightened when they saw a naked man in the Park, - of stolen plants having to be replaced and of a burglar alarm at the Gables. He also told of puriri moths being attracted to the street lights outside the house environs and how the moreporks sat on top of the lights where they could quickly and easily harvest the moths.

In more recent times the house has been let to park employees and latterly has been rented out to others.

**Weta at Brooklands Zoo
Brooklands Zoo Keeper**

Jasmine Webster

Did you know we have weta at Brooklands Zoo?

Love them or hate them, weta are amazing creatures and we are so lucky to have them around. Here in New Zealand we have more than 70 species of native weta; however, 16 of those are at risk of extinction due to rats, possums and insecticides. The most common weta we find in Taranaki, and which occupies the Brooklands Zoo weta hotels, is the tree weta. These are herbivores eating lichen and leaves.

The backyard wildlife area at Brooklands Zoo is home to two weta hotels and they are a hit with the visitors – these beautiful but scary-looking creatures always intrigue. The hotels provide a place for weta to come and go. The weta decide which niche they'll snuggle into so all we had to do was put the hotels in the right spot and – tah-dah! – we have a native species on display.

Weta live in small harems of one to two males to around 12 females. They come together during summer and autumn for breeding, then part ways for the winter. Male weta have much larger heads than females and more fearsome-looking jaws, whereas females have a long ovipositor (egg-laying tube) that looks like a stinger at the rear of her body. The children love to be able to identify the males and females apart.

Just inside the front legs of most weta types is a pair of holes: these are their ears! Being at the highest point of the body, the ears will obtain sound better than if they were on the head.

Next time you are at the zoo, find a Keeper and ask to have a peek inside our weta hotels and learn some more about these marvellous creatures.

