

The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park

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Canna 'Gaiety' - one of the very colourful Cannas on display at the Rogan Street entrance

Photo Derek Hughes

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Longwood Gardens

**Donna Christiansen
Technical Officer Fernery and Display Houses**

I was lucky to be involved in volunteering at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square which is located about fifty minute drive from Philadelphia in Pennsylvania, USA. When twelve Graduate students visited New Zealand last January on a garden tour and visited Pukekura Park, they mentioned to Chris Connolly that if anyone would like to come over to Longwood it could be arranged. Well, it had been a wish of mine for years to visit this wonderful garden so I jumped at the chance, and my six week trip to volunteer became a reality. After a bit of red tape I was on my way, leaving on the 3rd of September. After about 24 hours of travelling I was picked up in Philadelphia by Sarah Helm-Wallace who had initially organised the contacts. When we arrived at Longwood Gardens the glory of Longwood was revealed.

Longwood Facts.

- » Longwood gardens is run by a Board of Trustees which was set up before the death of Pierre Du Pont who owned and developed the garden. They have over a million visitors a year.
- » The 435 hectares of land includes 1.6 hectares of display Conservatory and 323 hectares of natural land.
- » A formal outdoor garden of 141 hectares includes a 2 hectare formal English styled Fountain Garden which was closed in October 2014 for a \$92 million overhaul.
- » The gardens employ 78 full time, 56 part time staff, and 800 volunteers who are involved in all areas of the garden and administration.
- » Seasonal Crops: 103,393 plants are grown for display and 73% are grown on site at the production glasshouses (9,300 square meters) with the nursery growing outdoor crops and the plants for the annual Chrysanthemum festival including the 1,000 bloom Chrysanthemums.
- » They plant 209,720 spring bulbs in the outdoor gardens.
- » 1,814 kilos of produce comes from the Ideas Garden and supplies the Terrace Restaurant at Longwood.

These are just are a few facts from this wonderful garden which I would classify one of the best examples of display gardens in the world.

Apart from the wonderful displays both inside and out a main goal is to educate and train horticulturalists and the trustees provide many programmes including a two year professional gardener qualification. Each year they have up to ten Internships which attract both American and international students. All the students have accommodation onsite at Longwood in one of the many houses on the property. There are also numerous lectures and workshops for the public and students over the year. All are booked out so there is great community involvement. They also have staff educators who provide educational tours for all school ages. Every day while I was there at least two school parties toured the gardens.

The management tailored a training program for me which allowed me to work in all areas of the conservatory, production facilities, design, water gardens and outdoor gardens. I worked a week in each area and got a good overview of the running of the gardens.

I was involved in the growing of Chrysanthemums for the Festival which is a huge display with about 80,000 blooms and numerous huge hanging baskets, and various forms which are immaculately manicured. This year the huge single plant had 1500 blooms on it. If you add up the total hours spent on this plant it calculates to one full time person for the year. They grow two plants and pick the best one a month before the display date. This Festival starts in the middle of October and ends on the 23rd of November when they install the annual Christmas Display.

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Xmas display



200 different varieties of Chrysanthemums grafted onto a single plant.



Above: The 1500 bloom chrysanthemum
Below: Spiral form chrysanthemum

Xmas display in the Exhibition hall



From the Fernery cont'd

I extended my stay by three weeks so I could see the Chrysanthemum festival installed and also be part of the team to set up the Christmas display which is huge. Over the period of the Christmas festival 24th Nov / 11th January the gardens expect 300,000 visitors. This information about the Christmas Display comes from Longwood Garden.

How do they do that?

The Christmas design and planning process starts more than a year before the display.

Dedicated staff, students, and volunteers work all year long; planning, preparing, and handcrafting unique ornaments for our guests to enjoy.

During the three days before Thanksgiving approximately 150 staff and students put in over 5400 hours in the final push to install the display.

Our gardeners refocus their creativity, talents and planning skills from the Gardens to the Christmas season every year.

Our own gardeners design and create many of the unique design elements seen on display.

Our Facility Department is critical to the success of all of our special displays. This talented team of carpenters, metal workers, painters, stone masons, electricians, plumbers and others are all dedicated to making the magic happen behind the scenes.

This year, talented local artisans added their art to displays in the Music Room, Mediterranean House, Fern Passage, Cascade Garden, and Rose House.

Connect the Christmas display to Longwood's entire year of amazing displays. Encourage guests to return for the Orchid Extravaganza from January – late March, Spring Blooms, a spectacular Summer and the Chrysanthemum Festival each Autumn.

Wow our guests with our lights! Longwood is illuminated with 500,000 Christmas lights each year. The arborists installed nearly 28 miles of lights from September to November! They spent more than 2300 hours hanging lights in the trees. All of our display is illuminated with LED lights – using about 90% less electricity than traditional holiday lights. We remove and reuse many of the lights. Any that are not reusable are recycled.

Over 10,000 potted holiday plants will be used in the Christmas displays. 6,200 were grown in Longwood's production greenhouses, including nearly 1700 poinsettia plants. Longwood's production gardeners grow exceptional plants through many hours of dedicated care tying, pinching and disbudding plants.

Three large showy 'Santa Claus' cultivars on display are grown here specifically to fit the scale of our Conservatory.

The nearly 100 cut trees selected for the display were grown at nearby tree farms. Those farms are our secret! The large broadleaf and evergreen shrubs will be planted into our grounds after the season.

Longwood has a collection of more than 500 different types of ornaments accumulated over many years. Careful observers can discover ornaments from past show stoppers used in new ways.

My trip to Longwood gardens has been the most amazing horticultural experience and this is only a brief account of my trip of which I have so many wonderful memories of the remarkable people I met at Longwood and the horticultural, technical, creative, administrative skills that are required to sustain and develop such an innovative, historical and forward thinking garden.

One of the Longwood mottos that will stick with me forever

"IT IS NOT DONE UNTIL IT IS OVER DONE"

and if you ever visit Longwood you will see why !!!!



Plant sale at the Band Rotunda

Julie Hunt

After months of planning and careful propagating in the backyards and gardens of Friends of Pukekura Park members, a huge variety of plants were ready to be revealed on Sunday 12th October 2014. The diversity and quality of stock on offer was a credit to all those who took the time to pot up and nurture their cuttings and seedlings over the winter in readiness for the spring sale. Even a leg in plaster did not deter Olive Armstrong from providing a huge array of plants backed up with boundless enthusiasm.

The Annual Plant Sale of Friends of Pukekura Park at the Band Rotunda was blessed with a very mild and warm, sunny spring day, which saw lots of customers and visitors to The Park take advantage of the many and varied plants on offer.

The sale got off to a good start and had a steady stream of customers right through the morning which finally eased off around early afternoon. During the day the helpers appreciated the refreshments generously supplied by Angie from the Tea House. We finally packed up late afternoon after a long and successful day. We transported the remaining plants to Adrienne Tatham's home for safekeeping and to count the day's takings, amounting to \$1,611.50, which was a really good result. After a well-earned sit down and cup of tea we had an informal debriefing session and came to the conclusion that we needed to hold a "Plant Garage Sale" to sell the remaining plants. So on Saturday 1st November, The Friends of Pukekura Park hosted a Garage Sale on the driveway of Adrienne's home and were able to sell the remaining lovely selection of plants and raised another \$418.50, making the total raised \$2,030.

A huge thank you to Adrienne for all the work she did in organizing these two very successful financial fundraisers. A further bouquet to all the other helpers, without whom we would have had nothing to sell! I am sure that the customers at the 2014 sale will look forward to the next plant sale with eager anticipation of some more great bargains.



Allan Vinnicombe

Gardening within the Park is natural for someone whose family have been so involved in horticulture, providing for their families in the way of previous generations. Allan was born and schooled in New Plymouth and aspired at first to go to University and gain a degree in Social Science or to be working outdoors with the Department of Conservation, the latter wish stemming from his father Barry's involvement with the Taranaki Alpine Club and the times he spent tramping with him.

However, after completing his schooling he became a fulltime youth worker at St. Mary's Church before undertaking a few months on an OE. On his return he followed his musical passion and played and sang professionally with various groups for the next five years, being adept at playing clarinet, saxophone and harmonica. He was a fulltime musician with several bands which was rewarding in many different ways, including financially as he sampled the nightlife around the town, playing jazz, rock 'n roll, blues or any other different music.

During the following five years he undertook an apprenticeship with New Plymouth District Council, beginning in 1982. He received well rounded training spending six months producing plants at the Park Nursery, six months with the mobile unit around town, six months with the Pukekura Park Sportsground staff and six months doing floral displays for community events and cut flower displays. He spent time working at The Gables and there developed the Herb Garden. Allan also grew vegetables for the Zoo and spent one day each week managing the Orchid Collection under George Fuller's watchful eye. He worked some of this time alongside Donna Christiansen and Sheryl Clyma and learnt a lot in the role of leading hand with the outside gang under Paul Jamieson.

Allan took time out from the Park and worked a year as sales representative for Westown Horticulture, then spent more time with Paul Jamieson surveying notable trees.

With the New Plymouth District Council he worked as Contracts Officer Horticulture and Arboriculture, then Assets Manager for the same department following on with Team Leader Hard Landscaping and then Team Leader Arboriculture. His most satisfying office job was in increasing the budget for arboriculture with Bryan Gould and Paul Jamieson. Two coordinator jobs were disestablished so he worked three years with the Field staff before joining the Pukekura Park staff four years ago. He loves working in our Park and gets enjoyment out of talking

with Park visitors. He also loves reconfiguring different areas such as the planting of Lobelias behind the Tea House and rejuvenating places which haven't had much attention in past years.

Allan spends his spare time with his partner, gardening, walking and tramping, and enjoying some music. He seems very happy in his work.



Photo Adrienne Tatham



Photo Derek Hughes

Ray Pope

Adrienne Tatham

Ray Pope is a member of the team of gardeners who work to keep our Park attractive and ever more interesting with varieties of new plantings in different areas.

Born and raised in New Plymouth Ray attended local schools and harboured aspirations to become a builder, joiner or butcher, but with few apprenticeships available at the time he left school he instead found himself doing seasonal work at Duncan and Davies' Brixton property, thus beginning his horticultural vocation.

He soon became unemployed but kept himself busy during this period working for nothing on farms in the Opunake area, milking cows, pulling ragwort, fleecoing and haymaking.

When a Park Work Scheme at Barrett Lagoon was implemented during 1980 he found work there. Subsequently he was employed by the Taranaki County Council during 1981-82 beginning with road construction jobs and the household rubbish collection. Work with the Parks Department followed and he began mowing grass and working with tractors and other machinery.

Then Ray made the change to Horticulture with the ITO scheme, taking advantage of the on the job training and assessment the course offered. His Certificate in Horticulture was achieved largely by correspondence with Wellington Polytechnic tutors and assessors.

While working under George Fuller at The Park he found working with retired farmers could be hazardous, as they were used to working on their own. So he then managed the Health and Safety Committee.

Ray finds working in the Park fulfilling in many ways and also enjoys gardening in his own space along with his partner. Spare time is used to hunt goats in the back country and surfcasting at Mokau. He is a keen member of the Antique and Historical Firearm Collectors Club and is heavily involved with the Gun Show held annually in New Plymouth.



Photo Adrienne Tatham

Summer Update

Sheryl Clyma
Assistant Curator Pukekura Park

For a summertime stroll in the park with the intent of enjoying some summer colour, park at the Rogan Street entrance and firstly enjoy the wonderful display the *Cannas* are putting on in the garden bed just inside the gate. The tall growing *Canna* along the back of the bed is *Canna* 'Wyoming' the rich dark foliage contrasts with the sunset- orange flowers. The groups in the front are *Canna* 'Gaiety', *Canna* 'Alberich', *Canna* 'Perkeo' and *Canna* 'Goldenbird'. This bed is showing the rewards from a winter cut back and composting along with a spring fertiliser application.

From here head down to the Fred Parker Lawn and gardens. Here you can sit in the shade and enjoy the mix of shrubs, perennials and annuals displaying their summer colour.

As you come up the track behind the teahouse your first summer explosion of colour is from the *Salvia involucrata* 'El Cielo', this *salvia* has reached a height of over 1.5 m and is covered with magenta flowers. Below this we have *Diascia* 'Apricot Sundae' which is flowering and covering the ground. In the same bed you can find more flowering *Cannas*. *Canna* 'America' is the tall *Canna* with red flowers, *Canna* 'Gnom' has the soft pink flowers and *Canna* 'Queen Charlotte' has yellow and red flowers.

The use of grey foliage in the garden provides a stunning contrast or backdrop to other plants, here in this bed we have *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle'. The feathery grey foliage forms a mound during the spring and summer, the plant is drought tolerant once established.

In the garden bed in front of the fernery office we have Canary Island Foxglove *Isoplexis canariensis* flowering providing a beautiful apricot flower, which the birds love. Setting this off nicely are the blue flowers of *Ageratum houstonianum* which is a perennial *ageratum* or known as a floss flower. Another plant near finishing flowering is yesterday today tomorrow *Brunfelsia pauciflora* this has been putting on a vibrant display from spring. Underneath the *Strelitzia*, which is just starting to flower, is a butterfly bush *Clerodendrum ugandense*.



Another demonstration of the rewards of grey foliage is in the bed under the *Acer*, here we have a large group of *Plectranthus argentatus* lightening up the shady area and complementing the foliage colour of *Pseudowintera* 'Red Leopard'. If you look carefully you can see some stunning foliage of *Canna tropicanna* peeking above the *Plectranthus*. We will have to do some rearranging in the winter time so this beautiful *Canna* foliage can be brought to the front.

Fuchsia 'Gartenmeister Bonstedt' is flowering away and is one of the *fuchsias* that can handle some dry weather.

To complement all of the above perennials and shrubs once again we have planted New Guinea *Impatiens* which are putting on a reliable display but do require watering to get them established.





Photos Derek Hughes

104 years old and Thriving!

Ormond Greensill

Proceed up Victoria Road in New Plymouth, with Pukekura Park on your left as you ascend the steep hill. As the road flattens out cast a glance over to the left and the Park. Can you picture six tennis courts and two croquet greens, guarded by the members' clubroom and an Eleagnus hedge? Probably not. But for just over forty years from 1910 to 1950 this was the home of the Pukekura Park Tennis and Croquet Clubs. Today you will view a plantation of predominantly native trees and shrubs in the area where the clunk of a mallet or the ping of catgut on a ball would regularly be heard from Labour Weekend until the following Easter. The tennis courts were located adjacent to the Shortland Street entrance with the croquet greens on the seaward side of them alongside the present Victoria Road parking area.

Why did the club relocate? The facts that answer this question may vary from one elderly identity to another. It is my understanding that the Park curator and those involved in the Park administration sought to transform this area of land – one of the few flat expanses in the Park – into an arboretum for native trees. Another suggestion is that wind needed to be kept out of the Park when the pine trees were felled, so robust species were planted.

Naturally there was a strong resistance to this proposal – with well known New Plymouth Boys' High School master and Club President Bob Penny, leading the opposition. Indeed, in his 1952 Annual Report Bob challenged the Council, stating "Sports Clubs occupying sites in public reserves should not be made chopping blocks for changing City Council policies."

But all entreaties to save this location from the planned development were unsuccessful. Three alternative sites for possible relocation were referred to the clubs' committee. One possibility was a site adjacent to Her Majesty's Prison at the end of Robe Street, where the quarries, no longer being worked, offered excellent shelter from the wind. Another proposed site was on land available where Vogelstown Park is now located. The third and least preferred site was the current home off Upjohn Street. Despite the club committee expressing its preferences for the former two sites, the City Council deemed where the relocation was to be – in Upjohn Street.

The club has regularly competed with distinction in the provincial interclub activities, and the Soffe Cup, symbol of supremacy amongst the clubs in Taranaki. This trophy has graced the trophy cabinet on eleven occasions since 1930. One New Zealand Championship can be claimed, with Barry Boon winning the Junior Boys' Singles title in 1951.



Included in this picture in no particular order are:
Rere Thompson, Mr Baker snr., Laurie Thompson, Ezma Pepper, Pauline Baker.

A quick history of the evolution of the Pukekura Park Tennis Club reads:-

1910, 25th June. Tenders invited for the laying of four tennis courts and a croquet lawn at the Victoria Road site, and a public meeting called to form the club.

1910, 27th December. Opening Day. The first club President was Mr Richard Cock.

1920, 2nd June. Pukekura Park Board approves an application for extension to the courts.

1933. Existing clubhouse is replaced with a new building at a cost of 337 pounds.

1950. The club learns that it is to be relocated to Upjohn Street.

1953. The club pavilion is removed in sections from Victoria Road to Upjohn Street. This building is still used today. The concrete steps remain near Victoria Road. Five tennis courts and three croquet greens are provided at the new site.

1965. The croquet club ceases to function at Upjohn Street with the lawns being converted into two tennis courts.

1972. The grass courts were replaced with sealed surfaces.

1975. Club name is changed to Pukekura Park Tennis Club Inc – i.e. croquet is dropped from the name.

1955. Grass courts dug up and laid as hard courts.

1987, 7th March. 75th Jubilee celebrated.

My grateful thanks to club stalwart Bruce Davidson for his help in compiling this article.



Above: Standing on the croquet green looking past the clubroom to the tennis courts.

Below: The pavilion steps.



The Bicycle Tree

Ian Hutchinson
Botanical Records Officer

Those of you who have visited the Children's Playground will have noticed a kauri tree near the Bridge over the Water Wheel. This *Agathis australis* has a rather interesting background and is known to some as the "Bicycle Tree".

In 1943 the Parks Department offered the tree to Mr Norton who lived at 89 Brougham Street. He planted the tree and some years later realised that it was going to end up being too big and was misplaced where he had planted it. So in 1949, some six years later he offered it back to the Park and then Curator J. W. Goodwin.

The method of transplanting was somewhat unusual, given the size the tree had grown to and the absence of a vehicle in which to transport it. The tree had grown to a height of around eight feet in the time it had been at Mr Norton's property. Mr Goodwin's solution for recovering and transporting the kauri back to the park was to detail Lou Schonbachler, a staff member at the park, to accompany him on a bicycle to the site and uplift the tree.

The kauri was dug up and as often happens with young kauri trees the soil fell off the roots. However the roots were covered up with sacks and the tree was lashed between the two bicycles. The slow journey of two men, two spades and an eight foot kauri tree wending its way through town heading for the Park must have seemed a strange sight.

The tree on arrival at the Park was replanted in its current location. Under Mr Goodwin's care the tree managed to survive this somewhat strange ordeal. Some sixty six years later the tree continues to be



the healthy, well shaped tree you see today.

So here's to this kauri, aka "Bicycle Tree". May it continue to live long and prosper.



Above: The "Bicycle Tree", centre, now towers over the playground.

Left: The trunk of the "Bicycle Tree" at 75+ years old.

Acknowledgement: I would like to acknowledge Cory Smith, George Fuller and Scott Medbury without whose information relating to the "Bicycle Tree" the retelling of this story would not be possible.

Robert Clinton Hughes

Adrienne Tatham

Robert Clinton Hughes lies in the churchyard at St. Mary's. The Chapter/Vestry of the Taranaki Cathedral, Church of St. Mary is currently working towards the restoration of every headstone in the churchyard to make the area more attractive and less subject to vandalism. The Manager of the Graves Restoration, John Pickering, endeavours to trace descendants of those interred in an effort to defray the restoration costs. In the case of Robert Hughes there are no descendants and the New Plymouth branch of the New Zealand Law Society was approached in an effort to find funding to complete the restoration of his grave, because he practised law in the town. This letter was in turn forwarded to our committee which decided to donate a small sum.

Robert Clinton Hughes was the driving force, one of several prime movers behind the establishment of the Recreation Grounds (now Pukekura Park) in 1876. He was deeply involved in the life of New Plymouth and by 1875 was a foundation member of the Board of Trustees for Public Recreation (to become the Botanical Gardens Board) which worked to develop a botanical garden in the town. He devoted hours of voluntary work to The Park improvement and to planting trees there. Hughes Walk commemorates his efforts. He willingly gave his support to several local bodies and was to retain a seat on the Pukekura Park Committee for more than fifty years. The guardianship of the inheritance of nature for future generations was always his especial care.

Mr Hughes was born in Auckland about July 1847 and his family moved to New Plymouth three years later. He attended Beardsworth's School in New Plymouth and spent seven years serving in the Taranaki Militia, a mandatory service in those days for able bodied gentlemen. He kept diary accounts of the overcrowding at the Barracks on Marsland Hill caused by settlers from outlying areas coming into the town for their safety. At the age of fifteen years he wrote graphic accounts of war-torn New Plymouth. On finishing school he served an apprenticeship with the well known New Plymouth solicitor William Halse and is said to have entered the office of the late Judge Weston, who practised in New Plymouth for a few years before moving to Invercargill. Mr Hughes was admitted as a solicitor in September 1870 and practised on his own account until his death sixty four years later. In 1833 he took his nephew Leonard Clinton Hughes into partnership until the latter's death in 1861. Arthur Standish became his partner and the firm operated as Standish and Hughes from 1879 to at least 1882.

He became a member of the Taranaki Provincial Council for two years from 1874 – 1876 and also served on the New Plymouth Borough Council. He was involved in many community groups including the Total Abstinence Society, the Band of Hope Society, the Temperance Alliance, the Taranaki Philharmonic Society, Polynesian Society, Mt Egmont Lodge of Freemasons, the Baptist and Anglican churches, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the New Plymouth Beautifying Society.

Mr Hughes was well educated and well known for his wit and humour and his love of poetry. He travelled extensively in England and Europe, being a fluent speaker of French and German. He also spoke Maori and from an early age showed his interest in Maori culture and mythology, sometimes visiting pas for days.

He married Amy Grace Burton on December 1st 1898 but the couple had no children. They lived at 43 Brougham Street above his work offices (latterly L'Escargot premises). This building was declared of Historical Significance in 1995.

Mr Hughes enjoyed many sporting and recreational pursuits including boxing, exploring the bush and climbing, indeed he arranged for Sir William Fox then aged seventy seven, to climb to the summit of Mt Egmont (Taranaki). Distance swimming was another of his passions and on occasion he would swim out to the ships to collect mail when the weather was too bad for them to come in.

When he died on 18th January 1935 at 87 years old he was the oldest practising solicitor in New Zealand and the last surviving member of the Old Taranaki Provincial Council.

Acknowledgements to the New Zealand Law Journal 1935 and the Taranaki Cathedral Church of St. Mary.

Otter Goings On at Brooklands Zoo

**Louise McKenna
Head Keeper**

Brooklands Zoo recently acquired a new female otter, 11 year old Jemima from Wellington Zoo. Sadly her male partner Bud (who used to live at Brooklands Zoo) passed away and she was left alone. Otters are a highly social animal and do not cope well alone, so we were asked by Wellington Zoo to try and integrate her with our resident pair of otters, 12 year old male Jala and 18 year old female Aqua.

Introductions with any new animals require careful planning, a good knowledge of the species' general behaviour and time ... lots of time. Otter introductions can be notoriously difficult if they are rushed as they are territorial and can be quite aggressive.

Before Jemima even arrived at Brooklands Zoo she had routine faecal testing done at Wellington Zoo to make sure she was not carrying any parasites that could be passed on to our otters and our otters had the same done here by our vets to make sure they were also free from parasites. Once we had the all clear Jemima was flown up from Wellington to New Plymouth on November 17th 2014.

She was housed in an off show building that has three separate enclosures ready to start the introduction procedure. Jala and Aqua were caught and transferred to the same building but into a different enclosure. To start with Jala and Aqua were housed together and an empty enclosure was left between them and Jemima for all of them to see, hear and smell each other through the mesh but at a distance. Once we were happy all otters were comfortable with having each other nearby we started to exchange soiled straw bedding and faecal matter between enclosures to gauge how they would react to each other's scent up close. No negative reactions were observed, just mild interest and scent marking. The next step was to separate Jala and Aqua so that we could have an otter in each of the three enclosures for closer interactions through the mesh. We started with Aqua next to Jemima because we felt that if any this was the introduction that could produce a negative reaction as Jemima is a much younger female than Aqua and she may want to assert her dominance over her. The first introduction was thankfully quite uneventful, regular observations were made by keepers and the otters were seen to touch noses and paws through the mesh and to be rolling around in play next to each other. Mostly there were only positive communication and behaviours displayed with just one warning "chuff" heard from Jemima towards Aqua. The following day we rotated Jala with Aqua and Jala was allowed to have access to Jemima through the mesh which again went really well with no negative or aggressive behaviours observed. Over the next ten days the keepers continued to transfer bedding, faecal matter and browse daily between all three enclosures allowing the otters to stay familiar with each other's scent and every couple of days we rotated the otters so that they were allowed mesh access to each other and did not allow them to establish their own territory in any one enclosure.

On 23rd December we carried out the first one on one introduction with no mesh between. Keepers were present both inside and on the outside of the enclosures in case there was the need to cause a distraction if any really

aggressive behaviour occurred. We again chose to introduce the females Aqua and Jemima first. All went well, they greeted each other calmly and proceeded to follow each other around the enclosures. Aqua was far more excited than Jemima and did at one point get a little carried away with grooming Jemima and she received a short warning "chuff" to back off. This first introduction was short, and ten minutes later we separated them. We repeated the process with Jemima and Jala being introduced without mesh which also went well with no negative communication. Over the next ten days keepers continued to transfer bedding etc., rotate the otters between enclosures



and carry out one on one introductions between all otters regularly and the length of time was gradually increased from ten minutes up to one hour.

During these longer periods we did start to see some different behaviour Jemima became more familiar with him and she certainly tried to flex her otter muscles a little! Mostly it seemed she was trying to incite play but at other times it became quite tough wrestle type play but still there was no true aggression. So we were not too concerned. Jala became quite good at just ignoring her when she got too much for him! Jemima did gradually seem to realise that Aqua was not up to her rough play (due to her age) and mainly left her alone when they were together and they exhibited lots of mutual grooming and gentle play together.

On January 7th the time came to introduce all three otters together for the first time. We carried out a brief one on one introduction just to make sure their demeanour towards each other had not changed and then we opened all enclosures and let them join as a trio. To start with it was an otter "follow my leader" with all three trailing around after each other from enclosure to enclosure and overall things seemed quite calm. There was a time where Jemima seemed as if she was trying to stop Aqua getting to Jala to have him all to herself but Aqua remained relaxed and did not challenge her so after a while Jemima relaxed more herself.

There were a couple of warning "chuffs" heard at different times from all otters but nothing serious and they all seemed to listen to each other and back off or show submissive behaviour where necessary. After 45 minutes we were happy that things were going smoothly and the decision was made to leave them together for the rest of the day as we felt that to separate them again might undo all the work we had done so far. Regular checks were made throughout the day and the otters were observed resting in their kennels together, eating, swimming and grooming each other, all positive communications. The group were left together fulltime for the next six days. We were aware from advice from other zoos that often communication of new otter groups had the potential to break down after a few days when often some otters can become dominant or aggressive as they try and assert their position in the group. So we kept a close eye on the otters but thankfully observed no such behaviour and they continued to bond as a group.

On January 13th the otters were transferred back to the main zoo enclosure. While it had been empty some maintenance work had been carried out by adding a new den area and mulch and logs were replaced. We transferred various items and bedding from the off show enclosure into the main one too so that there would be some familiar scent for the otters to associate with. Jala and Aqua would obviously be more used to the enclosure but for Jemima the space would be completely new and she would be relying on some familiar smells and Jala and Aqua to guide her around. Jemima was very cautious of the large pool to start with, we presume because it is quite different looking than her previous pool at Wellington Zoo, and would only dip her head in but was quite comfortable with the smaller pool and gradually as the day progressed she ventured further into the large pool. Aqua, who as a rule before was not keen on swimming any more was also observed being encouraged into the pool to swim with the others. Lots of scent marking and exploring ensued for well over two hours as they settled themselves in and got to know the area together. There is still a slim possibility that we may see a change in group behaviour over the coming days as they get more confident and comfortable in the enclosure, but early signs are all positive and we are quietly confident that the introduction process is now complete.

Aqua at 18 is in her twilight years and the fact we have Jemima already with Jala will mean that when Aqua passes away Jala will have another otter for company.



A Walk in The Park

Lyn Bublitz

For a number of years the 'Friends of The Park' have arranged monthly guided walks at 10.30am on the third Monday of each month, February to December. These were particularly popular when the late David Medway was the guide. The walks will continue this year.

Each walk features aspects of The Park - its history, plants of note, points of interest- and will be led by members with knowledge of the subject to be highlighted each month.

This year the topics will include:

- ✿ Introduced trees of note
- ✿ Photographing treasures of Pukekura
- ✿ Investigating Brooklands in depth, with the emphasis on the role played by the King family in its development
- ✿ Plants from the Gondwana era
- ✿ The fern kingdom
- ✿ Historic points of interest
- ✿ Retracing of the nature walk established over 30 years ago and forgotten
- ✿ Mosses and other primitive plants
- ✿ Revisiting the rhododendron and camellia collections
- ✿ A study of the forest remnants in the Maranui Gully

These guided walks are not restricted to members as anyone interested is more than welcome to join the group on any occasion. Walks are advertised in the MidWeek newspaper on the second Wednesday of each month and give the meeting point for the start of each. The walks are followed by tea or coffee in the Tea House for those interested - a time for fellowship.

We also have walks on the first Tuesday of each month, led by someone from the Curators Office, offering great insights into The Park features and maintenance. Anyone welcome, 10.30am start from the Tea House.



Above: Enjoying the view over the Japanese Hillside.

Below: We thought Chris was going to lead this walk!



Photos Derek Hughes