

The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park

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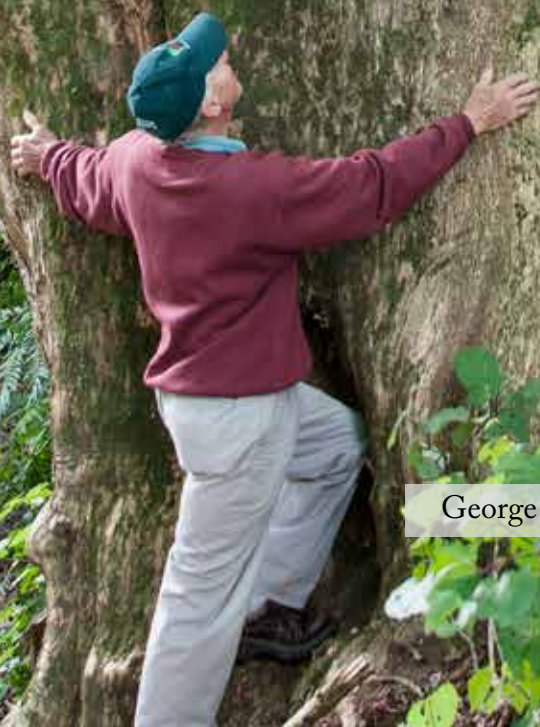


Friends of Pukekura Park
New Plymouth



George Fuller MBE
1929 - 2015

Typically surrounded by people while sharing his
knowledge of and passion for Pukekura Park



George with the puriri he dubbed "Enigma"

Photos Derek Hughes

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Happenings in the Park

Sheryl Clyma
Field Work Co-ordinator

The Racecourse Walk / Fernery project is still under construction with completion near. This is an exciting time for the Parks team as we have been waiting to take back control of this area and start the garden upgrades. We have already started re-vamping the Fred Parker Lawn gardens, where black soil and compost will be brought in to re build the beds and new perennials will be planted and others shifted.

The main playground has had Kikuyu turf introduced with the hope that this will enable the lawn to stay green over the summer months, the drought conditions of last summer meant we had a barren dry lawn. Hopefully the Kikuyu will provide a green springy surface for the children.

Fillis Street Entrance upgrade is near completion, staff will be planting the terrace with some palms, *Howea forsteriana* and *Dyopsis baronii* and cycad *Lepidozamia peroffskyana*. To complement these *Hibiscus Rosa Sinensis* and *Bougainvillea Jazzi* will be planted along with *Agave attenuate*.

The Rhododendron Dell is starting to take shape as a woodland garden. Last year we removed the Azalea hedges around the edges of the Rhododendron beds, opening them up for increased air flow and allowing for bulbs and perennials to be planted and viewed. This year, through winter, the Hellebores have been flowering thru winter and are now complemented by the Daffodil Snowflakes. To introduce more variety of flowering material we have planted groups of Pieris Temple Bells which are thrip resistant and provide spring white flowers. We have also planted some more Camellia reticulata. Further pruning and removal of Rhododendrons has occurred this season. We have concentrated on replanting varieties of Rhododendron *yakushimanum*. These are resistant to thrip, are lower growing and require minimum pruning.

In the last few weeks spring has arrived, the kowhai at Rogan Street Entrance are spectacular and are host to hoards of Tui. Japanese Hillside Azaleas are putting on a lovely display. Finally the poppies at Brooklands have flourished. Cherries and Magnolias are still providing some colour and food for the birds.



New Fillis Street wall.

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Above & left: The new look to the Racecourse Walk.

Below: Rhododendron Dell



Photos Derek Hughes

Furlong's Fountain

Ron Lambert

One of the earliest gifts to the Recreation Grounds – in 1882 – was a fountain and pool installed on what is now the Hatchery Lawn. It was donated by Thomas Furlong (1833-1919) one of the most colourful of New Plymouth's characters.

It was reported that '... Mr Furlong has expended a considerable sum of money pro bono publico. He has erected a fountain with a jet of about 9 feet, which plays in the centre of a neatly finished basin formed of turf sods. Furlong has also arranged to have an ornamental earthen [ware] basin about five feet high into which the fountain will play, and the spray will afterwards descend to the lower basin. This, when completed, will be an exceedingly handsome feature.' (TH 30 Aug 1882)

The installation of the 'handsome feature' was done by Furlong's friend, local entrepreneur and engineer, Edward Metcalf – "Ironsand" – Smith. (History of Pukekura Park, 1929) Two months later the fountain and several nearby ponds were being stocked with goldfish and carp. (TH 2 Nov 1882)

This first gift persuaded New Plymouth surgeon, Dr Paddy O'Carroll, to present a second fountain. It was erected and operating 'a short distance below Professor Furlong's...' by late December. (TH 28 Dec 1882)

But Thomas Furlong's generosity was not yet exhausted!

About the same time he presented plaster-of-Paris statuettes of two – of the three – Graces of Greek mythology to the park. They were placed on plinths in the lake and 'it is needless to say that they adorn the lake and arrest the attention of visitors.' (TH 30 Aug 1882) *It was with regret, though, that the Herald reported that a bather had accidentally damaged one of them (TH 28 Dec 1882) and the other was broken in half after being hit by a drifting rowboat. (TH 2 March 1885)*

But there was more!

'Mr Furlong, we understand, will shortly erect on the crown of the hill a flagstaff, on which will be fixed a large "tell-tale" mirror... It is a large glass ball which reflects the surrounding objects...' (TH 30 Aug 1882)

Unfortunately it is not at all sure that this attraction ever graced the park for long as '... it is probable, however, that the open space where the reflector stands will be appropriated, [for the band rotunda] and that Professor Furlong's gift will be placed in some other spot equally suitable.' (TH 14 Dec 1885)

Sometime in the 1880s Furlong also obtained possession of the ancient cannon, widely believed to be one of those used by Richard Barrett and Jack Love at the siege of Otaka pa in 1832. Thomas' presentation of it to the Recreation Board was accepted with thanks, although there were some questions over the legality of his ownership. (TH 20 Sept 1884) The gun, named "Dicky Barrett", was displayed on Cannon Hill for many years and it now resides in Puke Ariki.

The generous Thomas Furlong was born in Tipperary, Ireland, where, aged 18, he joined the 57th Regiment and served in the Crimea, Malta and India. In 1861 the 57th was posted to New Zealand and he was involved with the regiment at a number of actions including those at Katikara, Poutoko, Te Ahu Ahu and Kaitake.

Reputedly a fine horseman, Furlong served as orderly to Lieutenant-Colonel H J Warre and was discharged from the army after 12 years service in November 1863. (ARC2002-199) He then joined the Taranaki Mounted Volunteers, set up a livery and bait stables, and, as a general carrier, ran New Plymouth's first public taxi service. (TH 4 April 1919) He was also involved with competitive shooting for several years as a member of the Taranaki Rifle Association.

In 1868 Furlong established a successful hairdressing saloon and tobacconist's business in Devon Street. (TH 9 March 1895) It seems at this stage he also acquired the title of "Professor" presumably to help enhance his reputation. His son, Tom, later joined him in the business. Both father and son were reported to be 'exceedingly popular among their fellow-townsmen.' (Obituary: Thomas Jnr, TH 11 April 1924)

Thomas Furlong Senior died, aged 86, on 3 April 1919. His obituary detailed, that he '... enjoyed the reputation of being a man of straightforward and sterling character.' (TDN, 4 April 1919)

Unfortunately his gifts were not of the same quality. The plaster Graces soon deteriorated in the weather, the "tell-tale" mirror disappeared and the fate of his fountain is unknown.

Today, only the Barrett cannon survives.



Thomas Furlong's Fountain, 1882
PHO2007-027, Puke Ariki Collection

Professor Furlong Advert
Taranaki Herald 23 August 1878

**PROFESSOR FURLONG,
HAIR CUTTING, SHAVING, AND
SHAMPOOING ROOMS,**

(Next the Masonic Hotel,)

DEVON STREET, NEW PLYMOUTH.

Taranaki gents and ladies fair
Who prize a nobby head of hair,
Professor Furlong's, you know,
Is just the House where you should go.
He'll ent your hair, and curl it too,
And treat you to a rare shampoo ;
Throughout the town, his razor's been
Remarkable for shaving clean.
Tobacco and cigars he sells,
And all the news in town he tells.
You'll find in all his spacious rooms
Ambrosial scents and rich perfumes,
And sundry other useful wares,
Including grease from savage bears,
All really good. And be it known,
There's not a better Shop in Town.

**EXCELLENT BATHS ALWAYS
R E A D Y.**

SHOOTING GALLERY.

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The Life Of George Fuller.

Adrienne Tatham



George educating Friends in the Art of Path Raking

The Friends of Pukekura Park have lost a stalwart in George Fuller who died on 19th June 2015. He was passionate about our Park where he lived and worked for twenty five years. He said “I was in Paradise. I was working and earning a living in one of the most wonderful city parks in the world. We lived so close to the heart of the Park I felt its pulse.”

George MacMurray Fuller was born at Henderson on 9th January 1929. His parents had a family orchard business and recently Fuller Lane was named after them. One of their neighbours was an orchid breeder who encouraged him to learn more about plant nurseries by going to New Plymouth, and to learn more about orchids by going to England. He left school at the age of fifteen to work in Palmer's first nursery at Glen Eden, and then

spent time at Duncan and Davies Nursery in New Plymouth, the biggest nursery in the Southern Hemisphere. It was while he was there that he met Fred Parker who had a garden full of plants and was an orchid enthusiast. He worked weekends in Fred's garden.

In 1947 George boarded a ship bound for England. Some members of the crew left these ships when they arrived in this country and deck hands were needed to replace them, so George became one of these, at first a naïve young fellow, he soon learnt a thing or two about the world and its people. It was not long before he was advanced to being assistant steward at the captain's table on this voyage.

He began work in St Albans north of London at Sanders Nursery, the biggest and most famous orchid nursery in the world, and spent four years there. He helped stage a gold medal winning exhibit at Chelsea Flower Show, and found the whole experience a fantastic learning curve. This work made it possible for him to go to Kew Gardens as a student which he did for two years. During this time he became engaged to Doris with whom he had worked at Sanders'. The rules at Kew in those days said employees had to be single, so George decided to come home, having spent six years in England.

But a Swedish millionaire was looking for an orchid grower to grow plants hydroponically under glass, a brand new venture and part of this deal was that he represented the company on a visit to Australia and New Zealand, so George took this offer up and married Doris at Henderson on 29th December 1953. The Queen's visit took place at the same time and this had an influence on their wedding transport, for they had spotted an old buggy which they wanted to use, but it was needed by the Queen, so was painted pure white, losing some of its rustic appeal.

Following their honeymoon the couple headed off to Båstad in Sweden where George worked for Elektroflora. There he learned new techniques being used for horticulture and enjoyed living in a Scandinavian country. He spent six years there before wanting to head home with his young family of two boys.

But an English man was starting up a big propagation nursery in Malta and invited George to pioneer the development of that nursery, an offer he could not resist. Four years later this nursery was producing one million chrysanthemum cuttings a week which were transported to England and sold from there to flower growers in Europe.

Sixteen years had passed since George left New Zealand and Malta was getting its independence from being a British colony and so he decided to return home. The family with their three sons returned to Auckland on the Canberra through the Suez Canal and expanded the household of his brother for a while. Here he obtained a job assembling Volkswagens in Otahuhu and declined another job offer as a lowly gardener in the Auckland City Council Parks division.

Thinking he would obtain a job in Palmerston North he travelled there and on coming back through New Plymouth he called on Fred Parker who was planning to donate his extensive orchid collection to Pukekura Park, but required assurances that they had a competent person to look after it. Here was the man Fred was sure would undertake that job.

So it came about that George moved in to Pukekura Park in early 1965 to induct Fred's orchids into the fernery. He was made Curator of the Park the following year and lived on site in the Curator's house on Victoria Road. His children Chris, Alec, Ivan, Claire and Linda all grew up with Pukekura as their playground and often accompanied George on his missions within it. He was rueful in declaring that the Park became his obsession and castigating himself that he was neglectful of his wife and family. Some nights saw him out shooting possums, or following up some strange noise within the Park, for the Park never sleeps. One such midnight vigil was that of vandals throwing seats into the lake. George had a great way of teaching these 'young hooligans' a lesson and as a natural consequence of this behaviour (with the help of the police) they had to return for duty the next day in order



George with orchids from his collection.
Left: Pleiones Right: *Disa* Pukekura Park 'Red Statement'
Thanks to George's family for the use of these photographs

to retrieve the seats from the lake themselves. Another such lesson was taught by George to another group of young people who decided to take a midnight skinny-dip in the lake. That little twinkle in George's eye lit up when he seized the opportunity for this lesson on water safety. While the group were busy dancing on the fountain platform in the middle of the lake, he quietly relocated their clothes and when the swimmers returned to retrieve their clothes they were gone. He strongly believed that the riding of bicycles within the Park was undesirable and was known to have thrust rake handles amongst the spokes of bicycle wheels to prove his point.



George was curator of the Park for twenty five years from 1966 to 1990 and left his mark. He was not only a plantsman, but an ecologist and engineer – he really understood the factors which were present to affect the Park. His environmental awareness came to the fore as he became ever more involved with the land. Much of his concern within the Park lay with the passage of water through the area and the deterioration in the condition of the pathways. He was unstinting in his praise for key developers of the Park and was very mindful of the fact that no one person knows everything about the Park. He began planting trees straight away, it was a personal mission with him and later he would be surprised that so soon he couldn't get his arms around their trunks.

With the late Ian McDowell, George planned and built the waterfall, a project of which he was immensely proud. There was only a weeping elm to transfer from the site and when this was done work commenced with the help of a team of Park workers and some from the roving wider work force within the Parks team. Some of the squared blocks hewn by prison labour were laid in the area below the lower water curtain cascade and other boulders were donated and laid carefully. George marvelled at how things just sort of came

together for the Waterfall. He discussed the concept with Ian McDowell who got out a pencil and a scrap of paper and drew up what he thought George had in mind - an artist's sketch. They puzzled on how they were going to make it all hang together. Someone suggested they could use concrete Power Poles. A phone call to the boss at the Council Electricity Department and four brand new Power Poles turned up on site and were cemented into the face of the bank as the kind of backbone to it all. There were no engineering drawings or feasibility studies or consultants, they just sat down and talked over how best to do it and then got on with it.

There aren't any big boulders in the construction because each rock had to be physically manhandled into position without the use of a crane. Their very limited budget did not allow for such luxuries. George and Ian handled and positioned each and every rock. Their progress was to some degree limited by how quickly the skin could grow back after being worn off their poor hands. He said they were very lucky not to have suffered a back injury as well.

Getting back to the basic concept and design philosophy, the fall of water was intended to be like a river maybe the Waiwhakaiho River, starting as a little trickle high up in the mountains then slowly getting bigger with rapids in places till it gets to the flatland near the sea where it flows smoothly over the last fall into the sea at the bottom.

Another clever design feature was that they wanted moss and green stuff to grow on the rocks to make it look natural and they knew that this would not happen unless all the rocks were wet every time it ran. To achieve this they had to build water channels from the pool on each tier down behind each fall to wet the rocks behind. They put in tubes and stuffed them with newspaper to keep out the concrete. It worked really well and was all green and slimy looking within months of being finished.

They fortunately realised fairly early on, that if the falls at the top were going to be tiny, then it was not going to be possible to pump all the water to the top. It is kind of pyramid shaped and would have looked ridiculous with vast amounts of water roaring over the tiny first fall. So they installed a second branch off the water pump, half-way up with a huge valve to allow them to adjust the flow. On the upper tiers they wanted the flow of water to be wild and raging and random, rather than orderly, a little like nature. Considering how little any of them knew about designing and building a natural looking waterfall the result is a truly remarkable achievement. A plaque was unveiled to record this construction during October 1970.

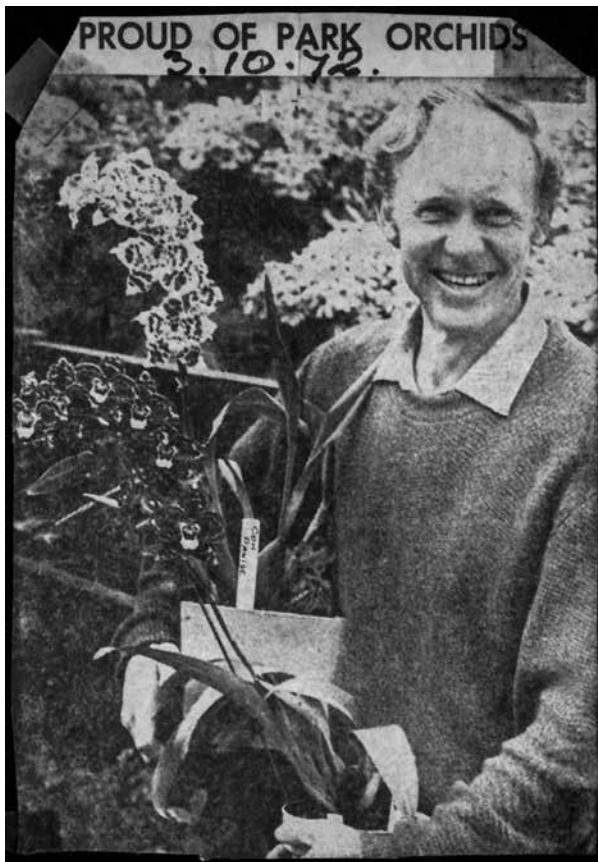
With one successful project completed, George's creative juices were ready for the next park project challenge; the water-wheel. This was erected in 1976. The wheel itself had been sourced from the Omata dairy factory where his son, Chris had a holiday job at the time. Once again George had completed another project to his usual high standard and had been hugely involved every step of the way.

Another memory George's family recalls is of George telling of his efforts to provide interesting entertainment during the annual Festival of Lights. He knew that every society and club in town was capable of doing something that would interest the general public. But in those early days, in the 1970s he had to beg and cajole clubs and groups to come along and show what they do or what they make. He had the Machine Knitters Club knitting jerseys and the Crochet ladies doing workshops with the public and Marching Girls and radio control boats and aeroplanes as well as musical groups, brass band, kapa haka groups, anything to make the place buzz. Over the years, it morphed and changed its form and focus and lots more musical groups were performing, many with big amplifiers and speakers and to some degree he resented all that big noise, for two reasons - it intruded on the peaceful serenity of the illuminated park at night and also because his bedroom window was just 50 meters from the stage. But he did realise that it was the sound of lots of people enjoying the free entertainment in his beloved park.

George was a man of many passions and deeply loved all the wonders of nature. No exception when he was doing his rounds in the park one night and heard an unusual sound coming from the trees surrounding the fernery lakes. This captivated him for many nights and his mission was to find out what creature was making these sounds. It must have been sheer determination and much patience that caused him to discover that a little tree frog was the culprit and in fact a previously undiscovered species of tree frog. Many nights were dedicated to trying to photograph and identify this little creature.

George was a very strong advocate for keeping the Park "natural" without structures, tar sealed walks and paths with edges. Praise was heaped on the endeavours of the retired farmers he was able to employ to keep the path surfaces maintained. These men had been working with water and soil all their lives and understood the effects of

heavy rainfall. He fiercely resisted attempts to seal paths and fought plans for unsuitable development projects. He believed that progress should not come at the expense of the Park's greatest assets. He also believed there should be no straight lines within the Park.



He loved all the trees and this became even more evident later on when he worked with Cory Smith to compile a book about those trees they regarded as significant, both within the Park and beyond it. George also wrote many descriptive articles, these were in great detail, very precise and were subjected to many crossings out and corrections before finding their way to a typist. Walks guided by George were always fascinating in their detail; he knew the history and possessed a huge depth of knowledge of the whole of the Park. The smaller side tracks were special to him, as he ran these for his recreation needs. Sometimes his tendency to let his stories wander meant the walks were much longer than he anticipated, but then the knowledge imparted was well worth the extra time involved. He was such an enthusiastic guide.

In 1966 he was the organiser of the Taranaki Floral Festival. His interest in orchids never waned and he became Patron of the Orchid Council of New Zealand and was a member of the Taranaki Orchid Society. He was successful in breeding a pure yellow *Disa* orchid after years of trial.

George also had a lifelong interest in photography. He meticulously photographed and recorded the details of orchids and many other things that he was involved with over his lifetime from the late 40's in black and white on plates and film and then on colour slides from the early fifties. At Victoria Rd the laundry was often turned into a darkroom and he would process black and white film and photographic prints. These photographic skills were also transferred to his children as they grew up. This photographic treasure is significant (in size and history) and the intention is to digitise some of the material and make it available through the relevant organisations.

George holding two orchids from the Park collection that were awarded highly commended certificates by the New Zealand Orchid Society at a 1972 conference, *Daily News* 3 October 1972

There are stories of George's experiences with slide shows and every now and again he would have disasters where the slides cassette would be dropped or have to be transferred messing up the order and flow of the presentation or many of the slides would come up sideways. He even did one presentation backwards because of this phenomenon and recalled one experience where a couple of slides even popped completely out of the projector startling everyone.

He was awarded the MBE in 1990 for his services to the community and in 2009 he wore this medal proudly on his suit during his campaign to save the trees on the Bowl Road when the New Plymouth District Council decided to form a new road connecting the Racecourse with the Brooklands Bowl because recent stables development had blocked the entry to the current road. As proposed and passed in urgency by Council, this road would have wiped out a shelter belt and destroy a large puriri tree estimated to be about 400 years old, as well as some twenty five other mature native trees. He dubbed the puriri tree "Enigma" and stood vigil at lunchtimes for seven consecutive days, explaining to the public about the need to preserve the tree and its roots, as he had painstakingly probed the road surface for root structures and found that this tree had grown on the edge of a cliff. He traced the roots of other native trees and taped the area which would be affected and was protective of a kohekohe which arched over the present roadway. While various Friends of Pukekura Park supported him at these times, it was because of his tenacity that in the end a compromise was reached. George was overwhelmed by the Council turnaround and he stated "It's proved that an individual with a little bit of logic, enthusiasm or obsession can move people in

big ways.” He was unique, he put his heart and soul into the Park and his fight, his “last stand” was typical of his strength of mind and dedication to the Park.

In 2010 The Taranaki Daily News voted him Person of the Year, a merit he richly deserved.

For those of us who have known him, George was a man with sparkling humour, who knew his subject and was prepared to stand up for what he believed in. He was a man of integrity who had a vast array of knowledge about his precious home, Pukekura Park. We will miss him.

This website has the more recent photographs of George’s orchid collection <http://fuller3.wix.com/gforchids>. This is a work in progress.

Many thanks to the Fuller Family for their input and use of photographs.



George Fuller (left) and David Medway - two dedicated Park stalwarts. Both missed.

David Leslie.

Adrienne Tatham

David's nickname is "Rat" but he is silent on how he came by this.

Born in Stratford in 1966, David spent his secondary school years at Francis Douglas College where his favourite subjects were Geography and History.

Following this he spent time on a farm at Tikorangi where he unfortunately contracted Leptospirosis, a debilitating disease contracted by dealing with cattle. On his recovery he worked as a fitter and turner at the Power Station in New Plymouth, serving six years in this position. Then he went off to Australia for his OE, spending seven years in Sydney doing landscaping jobs, general gardening and building walls. He returned to New Plymouth and worked in the Homecare industry for a couple of years as well as gardening privately on a property up Carrington Road. Following this he obtained a job through Adecco and worked at the Hobson Street Depot for five years. In 2010 he was moved to the Park where he is involved with track maintenance.

David's hobbies include watching the Taranaki team play rugby, gardening at home and going fishing with his surfcasting rod, Mokau being one of his favourite spots. At home he has a faithful friend in his bull terrier.



Graeme Neal.

Graeme, otherwise known as "Sherpa" didn't want to be interviewed for our magazine and he took some tracking down.

He was born in Bell Block in 1958 and claims to have been to primary schools in all sorts of places like Whangarei, Tauranga, Wairoa, Auckland and Green Bay, where he was one of the first intake of students. He attended Pakuranga High School and James Cook High School in Manuwera.

Following his school years he made pottery at a business called Tesian, from 1970 to 1980. Then he went off for his OE in Australia, wandering around there for a year. On his return he worked with Department of Conservation on maintenance of tracks and huts on Mount Egmont. After work on the mountain some days he and his fellow workers would climb to the summit and in this way he soon clocked up 50 summits of the mountain in the year he spent there.

Pukekura Park was his next love, and he worked here in 1985 while Allan Jellyman was curator. He went off to Canada for three months in 1987, exploring, while based in Winnipeg, and on his return he returned to the Park. He was employed at Lemon Street Depot for 18 years and was assigned to the Pukekura Park Maintenance team in 2004.

Graeme's interests are wide. He likes cycling and travelling, he watches the rugby and enjoys photography. He likes flying although he's not a pilot, and is an enthusiastic plane spotter.

Photos Adrienne Tatham



What's new at the zoo?

Joelene West
Keeper Brooklands Zoo

As a part of Brooklands zoo's contribution to conservation, we are occasionally asked to help rehabilitate injured native birds.

On 4 August a morepork (ruru) was brought to the zoo from the New Plymouth Vet Group for us to look after it while it recovers from a fractured wing. It was brought to the vet clinic by a member of the public who was concerned for its welfare.



The morepork is housed off-display while it recovers and it will be returned to the wild once it has recovered and built up enough muscle strength in its wing.

Some of our zoo staff have had hands-on experience with helping rehabilitate injured native birds and also have completed training at Massey University and at facilities overseas.

Brooklands Zoo has a Department of Conservation permit for rehabilitating injured native birds brought to us from DOC or the NP Vet Group. The permit is only for native birds such as tui, kereru and morepork, and is for non-display purposes to allow the injured bird time to recover out of the public eye.

As moreporks are nocturnal, we have set up a night camera in the morepork's enclosure to see what it gets up to at night. The morepork is eating well and is starting to use its wing when flying. We anticipate this individual to make a full recovery and to be released back to the wild in the near future.