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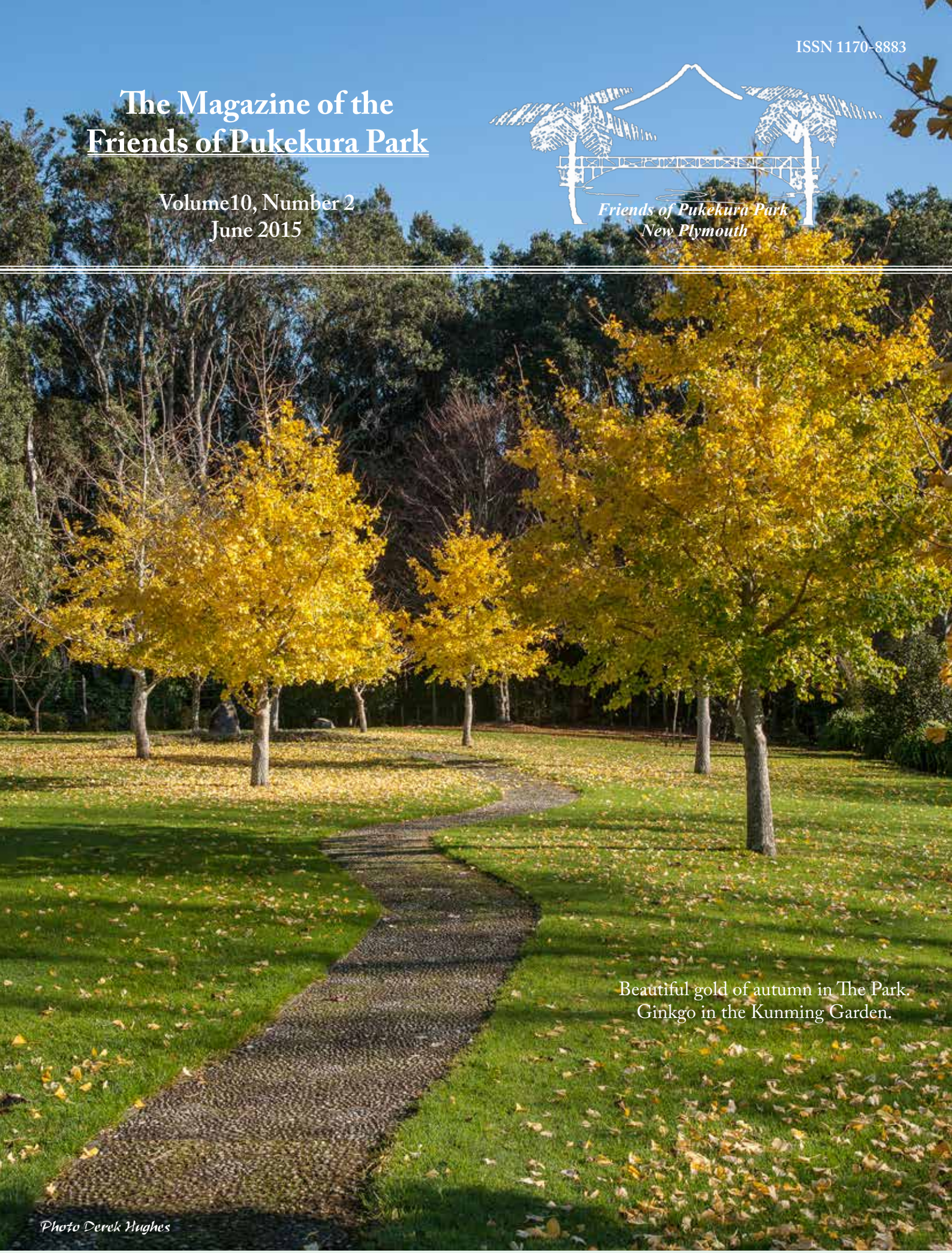

Beautiful gold of autumn in The Park.
Ginkgo in the Kunming Garden.

Photo Derek Hughes

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Seed Dispersal

Adrienne Tatham

How did that plant get to grow there? Seeds disperse in a myriad of ways.

Some have waterproof covers (kowhai, karaka) and float down rivers to land on swamps and river banks or travel to the sea; others like coconuts with their fibrous coating are resistant to salt water and are able to travel by sea for a long time and cover great distances. Apples, walnuts and acorns are a few other common seeds which float so they can travel by water. Some windblown and animal borne seeds can also be disseminated in this way.

There are seeds whose capsules explode when ripe or hot and fling their contents far and wide (*lathyrus*, vetch, violet) as the seedcase reaches maturity. Pine seeds noisily break out of their cones explosively on a hot day while *Banksia* and many other Australian species need forest fire to spur them into exploding.

Many seeds such as those of puriri are eaten by birds or animals and end up with their own dedicated supply of food and fertiliser on hand with which they may begin their lives far from the roots of the parent tree. These seeds are protected by their coats from the action of the digestive juices of their host.

Some are carried by animals by attaching themselves to their coats or wool such as bidibidi. Scabby mouth in sheep is contracted by grass seeds embedding themselves into their lips, their mechanisms designed to dig further as the sheep tries to rid itself of the intruder, but the seeds have covers which are built like arrow heads so as to not travel backwards. Forget me not seeds as we well know cling to gardeners' socks, trousers and gloves no doubt knowing full well they will be pulled off and sent on their way.

Some of these seeds are equipped with hooks or barbs to attach themselves, but others can travel in mud such as that on the legs of wading birds. Squirrels and rats cart seeds away and bury them for a rainy day, sometimes forgetting where they hoarded them.

Fine seeds are picked up on wind currents and travel for miles, that of purple pampas is known to travel for seven miles while those of pohutukawa have been known to pack down in roof guttering, rendering downpipes useless. These ones also commonly establish themselves in potted plants placed on a warm terrace.

Dandelions have parachutes which disperse seed prolifically and sycamores and maples have winged fruit which flutter and whirl in the breeze which takes them for quite a distance and gives them a soft landing. Some of these fruits have one wing, others have two. Then there is the tumbledown weed of USA which has a similar structure to that of marram grass, which we see blowing along our beaches.

Dandelion seeds.

Man collects and spreads seeds at will, either intentionally or otherwise. Sometimes crop seeds are contaminated by weed seeds. Harvesting machines disperse dust and seeds in all directions, while other hitch a ride on vehicles and earthmoving machines or trains.

If you have laid down bark, compost or mulch thinking you will have a weed free garden sooner or later seeds arrive and germinate, so expect some invaders!

When next we walk around the Fountain Lake and stop to admire the *Camellia* fruit by the weir at the various stages of growth beneath the parent plant, will we wonder why the apple is shaped and broken open in the manner it is, or was it destined to be carried away from its parent by animals or water? Should the tree be growing on a slope in nature, so that the round containers roll away from the root zone and have a good chance of survival?

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Metrosideros in the Park

Valerie Smith

The *Metrosideros* genus, to which pōhutukawa and rātā belong, comprises about 50 species of woody trees, shrubs and vines native to the islands of the Pacific Ocean, from the Philippines to New Zealand, with one isolated species from South Africa. New Caledonia has the most species, with twenty-one, and New Zealand has twelve.

Metrosideros translates from the Greek *metra* 'heartwood' and *sideron* 'iron', and refers to the very hard wood that is characteristic of these trees. The name was first used by the German-born botanist Rumphius (George Eberhard Rumpf) in 1743 to identify a group of very hard timber trees in the Indonesian island of Ambon. It was used again by Daniel Solander for a species collected in Tahiti in 1769 by artist Sydney Parkinson (now *Metrosideros collina*), and for pōhutukawa, *Metrosideros excelsa*, and southern rātā, *Metrosideros umbellata*, observed, collected and illustrated in New Zealand during Captain Cook's first voyage.

To Māori, red is a sacred colour, and pōhutukawa and rātā have long been appreciated for their aesthetic as well as functional attributes. Early Pākehā settlers used rātā widely in timber and sawmilling operations, and for subsequent fencing of cleared land and fuelling of dairy factory boilers.

Some *Metrosideros* trees are hemi-epiphytic, that is they begin life as epiphytes (perching plants) and then form trunks of their own. A few are thought to be completely epiphytic.

As with many other members of the myrtle family (Myrtaceae), such as the Australian eucalypts and bottlebrushes, *Metrosideros* leaves are simple, tough and resistant to dessication; flowers have conspicuous, often brightly coloured clusters of stamens that attract pollinators such as birds, insects, lizards and bats to the nectar-filled cup formed by the joined sepals above the ovary. The fruit is a hard, dry capsule with numerous wind-borne seeds.

Metrosideros is well represented in Pukekura Park. However, it is not the large tree species that are the most eye-catching in this setting – unless in flower, pohutukawa and northern rātā, *Metrosideros robusta*, tend to merge with other large native and exotic specimens in the

Metrosideros elegans – flowers, bark & litter

Photos Val Smith

backdrop and on the skyline. The northern rātā here are the terrestrial single-trunk form, known locally as blue rātā due to the colour of the wood, and were collected as seedlings from the vicinity of Blue Rata Reserve beside the Hangatahua/Stony River inland from Okato. It is recorded that nearby, in the forest of Egmont National Park, large specimens of the same species were "strangling rātā" of epiphytic origin.

Metrosideros perforata

Photos Val Smith

More likely to be noticed by passers-by along the lower paths of Pukekura Park are the climbing rātā, or aka, the Māori word for vine: *Metrosideros carminea* with its dense display of small bright red flowers in September; the abundant *Metrosideros perforata*, with its almost round leaves and masses of small white flowers in early summer; the autumn to winter-flowering *Metrosideros fulgens*, forming columns of dark green foliage and relatively large orange to red flowers, or the characteristic pendulous branches of sharply-pointed overlapping leaves of sparsely flowering *Metrosideros colensoi*.

Metrosideros subgenus *Carpolepsis* comprises three species of hemi-epiphytic rainforest trees that occur only in New Caledonia. All have characteristic bright yellow flowers and winged seeds. In October 1981 a tree received from the Wellington City Council as *Meansia aurea* was planted near the top of Brooklands Drive. After years of uncertainty, it was identified in 2010 as *Metrosideros elegans* (synonym *Carpolepsis elegans*), a rare species in cultivation in New Zealand. It was just starting to flower when I checked it out on 7 April 2015 (minus my camera), and when I returned after three days of almost continuous rain, the ground beneath was carpeted with fallen leaves and sodden flowers. On 20 April a remaining cluster of little yellow flowers in reasonable condition was just within reach and duly photographed.

At the time of writing (mid-May) the brilliant red splash of the Pacific *Metrosideros collina* 'Tahiti' near the Tea House is nearing its end, but later in the year the Lord Howe Island endemic *Metrosideros nervulosa*, named for the many large veins in its leaves, will be worth checking out in the Victoria Road car park garden. Waiting in the wings are recent plantings of the rare white Bartlett's rātā, *Metrosideros bartlettii* from New Zealand's Far North – but it may be a long wait! Where there is life there is also death, and two species difficult to maintain in cultivation, southern rātā, *Metrosideros umbellata*, and the rather spindly but beautiful *Metrosideros parkinsonii,* the least well known of the genus in New Zealand and the only plant named after above-mentioned Sydney Parkinson, have been lost.

Metrosideros fulgens

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Troy Edgecombe

Adrienne Tatham

Photo Adrienne Tatham

Troy is a member of the Park staff who has toiled here for some time. Born in New Plymouth in February 1986, he attended primary school in Inglewood and continued on to study at the Inglewood High School where he finished his seventh form year.

He began an apprenticeship at New Plymouth District Council at the end of that year but after an accident was forced into having a year off and then worked part days at Pukekura Park while he recuperated. Troy was able to return to fulltime work in 2005.

He was rotated within the Parks team spending time at Brooklands and at Hobson Street.

Then he broke an ankle and missed out on some aspects of his training. However, he completed his Advanced Certificate of Horticulture in 2008 in spite of his setbacks.

Troy is the staff's Union delegate within the Park, an important role.

He is proud to have been involved with the Kunming garden when it was initially planted, and loves seeing new projects completed. *Acer* and *Gingko* trees are some of his favourite plants and some of these species are planted in the Kunming area.

Last year he married Julia twice, once here and again in the USA, and spent time with his wife and parents in Tauranga. Julia hails from Abilene in Texas. These two are saving up to buy a home of their own, with of course a garden Troy can play in.

His interests include playing hockey, listening to music, particularly The Eagles and coaching Inglewood High School hockey team. A Canberra Raider fan, he spends some of his spare time watching his favourite team.

Alex Harfield.

Alex Harfield is our current apprentice, presently working with the Park staff, but soon to move on to another aspect of his training.

Photo Troy Edgecombe

Alex is English, he was born near Farnborough in 1993 and moved to New Zealand when he was seven years old, because his father chose to change countries. After his primary schooling he attended New Plymouth Boys' High School for five years and worked after school at Adrian and Cherry McLeod's Fairfield Garden Centre where he learnt some aspects of plant retailing. He then returned to the United Kingdom for a couple of months.

When he returned he decided to go dairy farming and worked in that industry for a year before joining the New Plymouth District Council as an apprentice in the Parks Department.

He has spent six months at the Hobson Street depot and six months in Pukekura Park, taking in two days a week at the Fernery, and has also spent three months with the construction team and three more months with the team of arborists.

Alex shares a home with flatmates and spends his spare time hunting deer, goats, pigs and possums and enjoys fishing in lakes and some hiking.

No doubt he will finish his apprenticeship and enjoy a bright future in the horticultural industry. Planting trees is Alex's passion.

Pukekura Park Projects

Chris Connolly
Curator Pukekura Park

Pukekura Park is a busy place at the moment and will continue to be over the next few months with several significant works either underway or due to start shortly.

Work to reshape and put a permanent surface on the gravel track which runs from the TSB Stadium car park down to the Tea House and Fernery entrance is well underway. The focus of the work has been on completing the Tea House and Fernery end to minimize disruption for Park users. Earth works and shaping plus the installation of permanent lighting will then be carried out on the path up to the Stadium. For the lighting we will be using lamp poles similar to those used on the Horton Walk and outside the Tea House.

Other track work planned this financial year includes improvements to the track which starts at the Boatshed Bridge and goes along the side of the Boatshed lawn toward the Rhododendron Dell plus a small section of track below the Lily Pond Dam.

The second big project is the western frontage of the Park on Fillis street. (see photo below) The initial clearing of vegetation was completed in April. The Herpetological Society was contacted before work started so they had the opportunity to recue any geckos from the bank before the clearing work was undertaken.

The work planned for this site includes the removal of the failing retaining wall which runs along Fillis Street at the bottom of the bank and replacing it with a new wall and a smaller retaining wall is to be built on the bank above this to provide additional stability and to catch any debris which comes off the bank above. The top of the bank will be shaped and hydra seeded to minimize erosion.

Planting plans for the lower section of the bank are yet to be finalised but we will be looking to establish plants which will thrive on this warm north facing bank, are easy to maintain and provide year round interest and colour.

Another significant Park project is the replacement of the old recycled metal drums which have been used for years throughout the Park as rubbish bins. These drums will be replaced with new rubbish bins of a similar design to those installed at the Tea House and outside the Fernery entrance.

The Zoo isn't missing out either, for some time we have been looking for an opportunity to get Charlie, the sulphur crested cockatoo, out on display and interacting with the public. The Rotary Club, New Plymouth North, together with a company called Coastal Services are building and installing two covered perches in a corner of the Zoo where Charlie will be safe and be able to talk to and entertain zoo visitors. At night Charlie will be returned to his enclosure at the back of the Zoo.

A Request For Help

Recently we have had reports from neighbours of the Park and from visitors, who have seen motor bikes and small four wheeled, powered ride-on vehicle in the Park. Recently staff have also reported seeing wheel marks made by these vehicles on the track behind the Zoo and as a result we have recently installed a barrier near the entrance to this track where it comes off Brooklands Park Drive.

The use of these types of vehicles in the Park is prohibited and I would appreciate your help by reporting any sightings to Council by phoning the Council number 7596060 or emailing the Council.

Often these activities occur outside our normal working hours so we rely on public support to assist us with managing these issues.

Don't get involved with these people just report the activity along with a vehicle registration number, if they have one, plus any other distinguishing features.

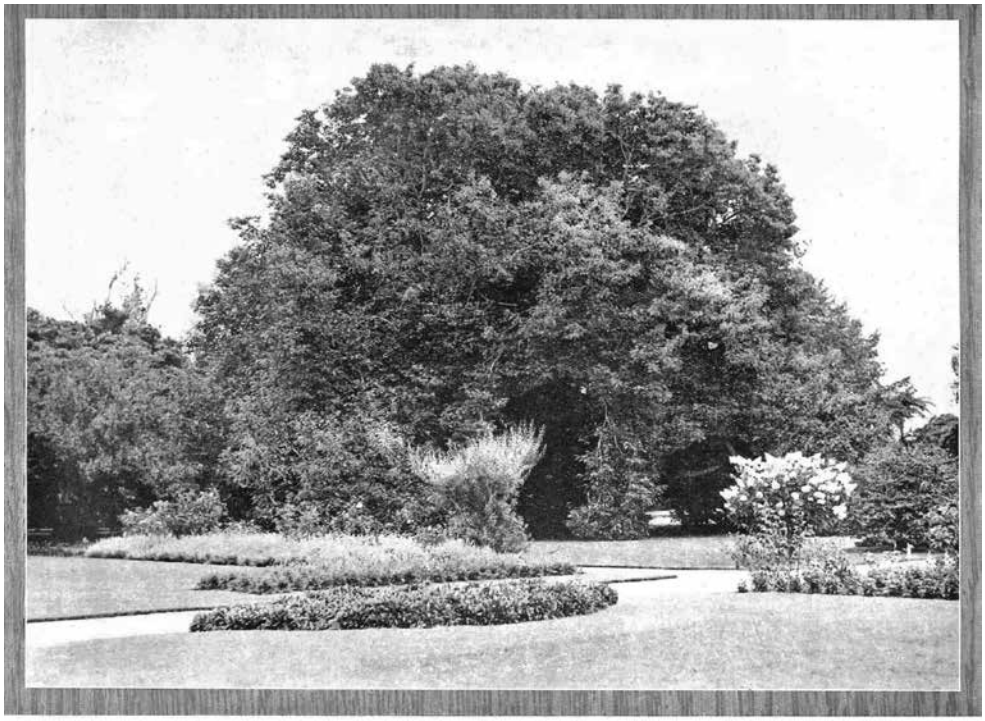
Thanks for your support in this matter.

June 19 2015, Pukekura Park lost a stalwart supporter with the passing of George Fuller, MBE.
Park Curator 1966 - 1990.
2009 Taranaki Daily News Person of the Year.

Photos Derek Hughes

The Brooklands Goliath

Ron Lambert



THE FAMOUS CHESTNUT TREE IN "BROOKLANDS."

Photograph: J.A. Austin, *Official Opening of Brooklands*, 1934

In the late 1970s a decade-long battle to save a wondrous giant was finally lost.

The famous sweet chestnut in Brooklands Park was declared un-saveable by Parks Director, Jack Goodwin. (*T Herald* 28 Nov 1975)

The Brooklands' sweet, or Spanish, chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) is thought to have been planted about 1846-47 by either Captain Henry King, the owner of the Brooklands himself, or Miss Brough – his home-help. (Burstall 1973)

Henry King, an ex-Royal Naval captain, and New Plymouth's first magistrate, bought the estate in 1842. His homestead was burned by Maori in March 1861 – a casualty of the First Taranaki War - but the fireplace in the Brooklands lawn survives to this day.

By the 1930s the chestnut tree was becoming recognised as a unique specimen with a spread in excess of anything recorded in the United Kingdom. At the opening of Brooklands Park in 1934, the Governor-General Lord Bledisloe made special mention of "*the great Spanish chestnut ... a truly wonderful tree. I can say so with confidence, because I have on my family estate the finest grove of Spanish chestnuts in England....*" (*T Herald* 12 March 1934)

Pukekura historian, Brian Scanlan, relates that F. P. Knight, the director of the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley, visited New Plymouth in 1958. Knight commented that he had seen much older trees, but never one with such a huge span. (*T Herald* 16 July 1983)

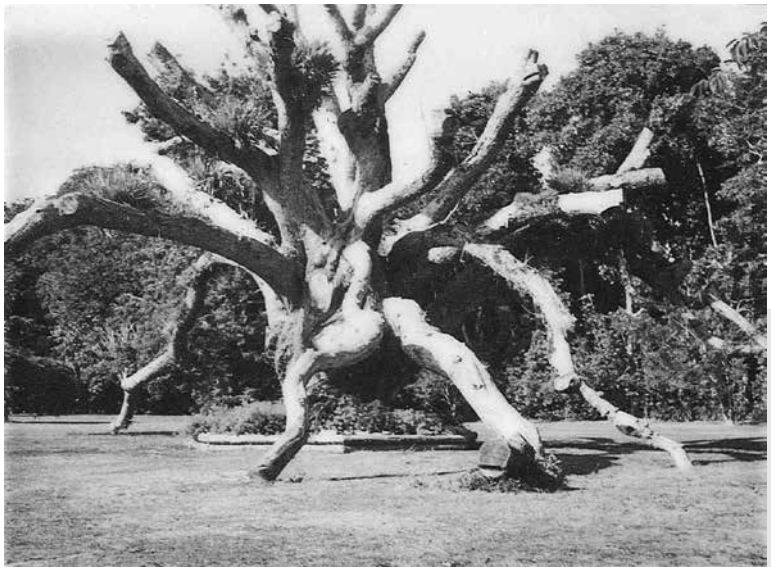
Over the years a number of the lower branches bent to become rooted where they touched the ground to form an impressive marquee-like enclosure. Local folk-lore has it that up to 200 people were once seated under its branches to take tea. (Scanlan 1978)

S. W. (Bob) Burstall in his 1973 Forest Research Institute's survey of notable New Zealand trees described the chestnut as, "*one of the outstanding exotic trees...and believed to be the best of the species in the southern hemisphere. A remarkable tree*". In 1969 when he again measured the chestnut, its trunk was 2.2 metres in diameter at breast-height; had a height of 18 metres and a spread of 42.6 metres – an increase of 6.5 metres since 1961. This increase seems, though, to have been a last gasp from the dying tree – a short-lived response to added artificial fertilizer. (Burstall 1973)

The first hints of disease had appeared in the late 1940s (*T Herald* 16 July 1983). By 1971 it was painfully apparent that the goliath needed immediate remedial work in an attempt to stop the 'rot' caused by a root fungus and borer. (*T Herald* 13 April 1971) Notwithstanding a well-planned programme using fertilizers, fungicides and insecticides, a Department of Scientific & Industrial Research scientist, Dr J. B. Taylor, reported that the tree 'will ultimately be totally lost.' (*Daily News* 18 Dec 1973)

After its death, the immense carcass was trimmed to a sad skeleton in 1977 (*Daily News* 2 July 1977) – a skeleton which was finally removed a few years later.

The Chestnut and Brooklands Head Gardener, Thomas Boulton, 1925
Photograph: J.R.Wall, A.4.105 Puke Ariki Collection



The Brooklands Park Chestnut - about 1980
Polaroid Print: ARC 2003-859/4,
Puke Ariki Collection

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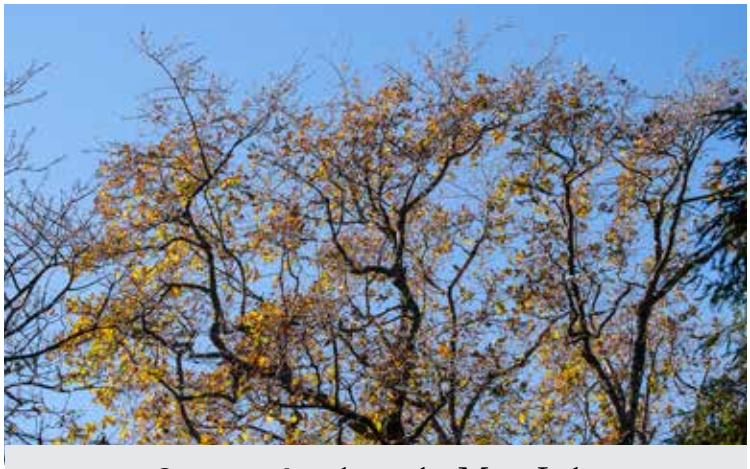
The Oaks Of Pukekura And Brooklands

Ian Hutchinson
Botanical Records Officer

The first tree to be officially planted in the "Recreation Grounds" (Pukekura Park) was an English oak, *Quercus robur*, planted by Miss Jane Carrington on 29 May 1876. This was planted with three other trees on Cannon Hill, as part of the official opening.



Quercus robur above the Main Lake

An article in the Taranaki Herald (31 May 1876) about the opening suggests the oak was planted on the eastern side of the hill, as the remainder of the official plantings took place (in this order) a puriri on the north side, a Norfolk Island pine on the western side and a pine tree on the south side. Unfortunately the oak tree no longer exits.

It is possible that the oak and other ceremonial trees may have come from Egmont Nursery at Ratanui (one of the few if not the only nursery operating at the time), or from Mitchinson's Caledonian Nursery. James Mitchinson is a name that crops up regularly in the early years of the Park's history. He was likely to be involved as he had an association with both these nurseries having taken over the Egmont Nursery from James Laird in 1869 until he set up Mitchinson's Caledonian Nursery at Pukenui Street in 1876.

The next significant plantings of English oak are along Hughes Walk and on the bank at the south-western end of the Main Lake. These oaks appear to have been planted sometime between the opening of the park and the construction of Poets Bridge in 1883, but possibly planted even as early as 1876. Early photographs of Poets Bridge show the oaks already growing on the bank and it is known from the Taranaki Herald that the Recreation Ground Board received a parcel of 2,000 plants from Canterbury in September 1876. It is quite possible that the oaks may have come in this donation of plants along with pines, sycamores and elms. A quick internet search revealed an article by Warwick Harris about a reserve at Akaroa called "Garden of Tane Scenic Reserve" in which plantings took place in 1876 that included oak, sycamore and elms.

English oak is also found in the vicinity of the Tea House. While it is not exactly certain when these were planted some early photographs of the original Tea House (built in 1905) taken around 1912-14 show the oaks as already well established. When compared with photographs taken of the oaks on the western side of the Main Lake the sizes seem comparable which suggests they were probably planted at the same or similar time to the Main Lake oaks. Another possibility is that they may have been part of an offer of 500 mixed trees and shrubs for the grounds by James Mitchinson in July 1878, which the Board accepted at an offer rate of 10s per hundred (as reported in the Taranaki Herald 20 July 1878), as by that time the Main Lake dam was completed which would have made access to this particular site simpler.

While looking into the oaks by the Tea House I came across another interesting part of the history of this area relating to a 1912 development project by the

Light through the leaves of the Himalayan Oak, *Quercus lecotrichophora*, in the Kunming Garden

Curator W. W. Smith. It started in May 1912 with the proposal that the reclaimed swamp behind the teahouse be converted into flower beds and a rosery (Taranaki Daily News 21 May 1912). According to the newspaper the completion of flower and rose beds was reported to the Board by Smith, when it met on 6 August 1912. At the following Board meeting on 10 September the Curator reported that he had received some valuable donations of plants at the Park during the past month - Mr Mace had sent one dozen mixed plants, Mr Layard of Pungarehu, forwarded a large collection of mixed plants, Mr John Wheeler of Inglewood, a collection of native plants and three seven-foot standard weeping ash trees (Taranaki Daily News 11 September 1912). The donation from Mr Wheeler is particularly notable as the three weeping ash trees could be attributed to the weeping wych elm in this area, the ash tree that used to grow behind the Tea House, and the weeping elm that used to be near where the waterfall is now and the plants just being given the wrong names in the paper. In one of the photographs of the original Tea House a tree can be seen which is very likely to be the weeping wych elm. Adding further to the likelihood is that there is an example of weeping wych elm on the railway reserve in Inglewood near the heavy traffic bypass.

A red oak, *Quercus rubra*, can be found on Smith Walk and most likely came into the Park in October 1915 as part of a donation from Duncan & Davies. There was a second specimen and this was at the Palm Lawn, but it was removed in 2001. The Taranaki Daily News reported that Duncan & Davies had exhibited red leaved oaks at the local Horticultural Society Show in April 1915.

The last group of oaks in Pukekura Park worth mentioning are the holm oaks, *Quercus ilex,* at Victoria Road on the eastern edge of what was tennis courts and a croquet lawn. These evergreen oaks were planted in 1950 by Jack Goodwin, Park Curator 1949-1977. He planted them to create a shelter belt for the interior of the Park prior to pines on the western hillside being removed, which happened in 1964-65. These have done a wonderful job protecting this part of the Park from westerly winds.

At Brookands, Newton King had planted English oaks, *Quercus robur*, and pin oaks, *Quercus palustris*, as part of his garden. The English oaks possibly came from Mitchinson's Caledonian Nursery as it is known that Newton was friendly with James Mitchinson, and had employed Tom Boulton, who trained as an apprentice at Mitchinson's Caledonian Nursery, as his head gardener. These oaks were probably planted in 1898 along with the oaks in the Rhododendron Dell and the London plane trees, from Thomas Horton's Nursery in Hastings.

The pin oaks were probably planted a little later than the English oaks and may well have come from Duncan & Davies, who were displaying and obviously marketing red leaved oaks as mentioned above in the second decade of the twentieth century. So it is possible the two specimens of pin oak were planted around 1910 to 1915. The 1986 Scott Medbury measurement of trees in the park records the planting date as circa 1910 so given the knowledge about Duncan & Davies; this time frame would fit.

Autumn - a time of shadows.
This one cast by *Quercus palustris* in Brooklands.

The last oak to speak of is to be found in the Kunming Garden and is an example of the Himalayan oak, *Quercus lecotrichophora*. This plant came into the park as a donation from Jill Anderson, who had originally purchased the plant as part of the Share International fundraising programme to save Himalayan oak trees which are threatened in the wild through habitat destruction. The acorns were collected in Northern India by the Himalayan Tree Trust and raised in New Zealand and then sold to raise funds. I suspect that Jill probably realised that this tree would be potentially too big for her garden on the corner of Rogan and Gover streets and so wanted to re-home the plant. As far as I can tell Jill gave the tree to Jenifer Gleeson, her neighbour across the road, to take to the fernery to be grown on, sometime around 2002 when Jenifer started working fulltime at the fernery. Subsequently it was planted out in its current location on 1 October 2010. Of the oaks in the park it is probably the rarest species to be found growing there.

All things browse-worthy - the benefits of browse

Emma Ries
Keeper Brooklands Zoo

At Brooklands Zoo there is something which plays an important part of everyday life for all of our animals, but often goes under the radar - that which we call 'browse'.

Any branches or trimmings of non-toxic, edible tree species that are suitable to give to the animals, we refer to as 'browse', and it is usually collected by our keepers or park staff whenever possible.

Here at the zoo we see all sorts of interactions between animals and their plants, and it soon becomes obvious that browse serves numerous functions.

In the wild, many of our animals (e.g. alpaca, and various bird and primate species) would eat different parts of plants – such as the leaves, buds, shoots, flowers and roots – as part of their diet to gain the nutritional requirements that they need, such as fibre and protein.

In a captive environment when browse is not readily available, fruit and green vegetables are often used as a substitute.

However, wherever possible, browse is offered and can make up a significant portion of their diet.
Browse is used by keepers to help stimulate natural behaviours in the animals involving touch, taste and smell, and can also be used to provide visual barriers and hiding spaces for individuals.

Our parrots and Charlie the cockatoo like to eat any flowers and berries, or strip and destroy them, giving them hours of entertainment. Monkeys jump in browse, break it apart, play with it and chew on it. Bert the blue-tongue skink uses it to hide in, forage through and rub on when he is shedding. The alpaca and pigs eat and roll in it, and the guinea pigs eat it and gnaw on the bark to keep their teeth short.

Particularly in a captive environment, it is useful to bring the outdoors in to revamp areas like a hospital or den, which are generally rather sterile environments with concrete surfaces and basic perches or shelves. By using browse, we can instantly change such an area into an enriching space for the animal. We even use straight branches to replace old perching or to make enrichment items such as ladders.

Donations of branches (or large clippings) that could be used as browse are very appreciated, as long as they are chemical and weed free. Pick-up for large quantities may even be arranged by the zoo if time permits. So next time you are in the garden and have green waste to get rid of, why not consider the zoo animals?

Some common favourites are coprosma spp, mahoe, puriri, cherry, karo, broadleaf, corokia, lemonwood, cabbage tree, karaka (without berries) and hibiscus. A more comprehensive safe browse list is also available from the zoo.

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