

The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park

Volume 14, Number 1
February 2019



*Friends of Pukekura Park
New Plymouth*



Another fantastic Festival of Lights
in Pukekura Park.

Photo Derek Hughes

This Magazine is made possible through the generous sponsorship of Graphix Explosion

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Changing of the guard

Adrienne Tatham

Chris Connolly moves on.

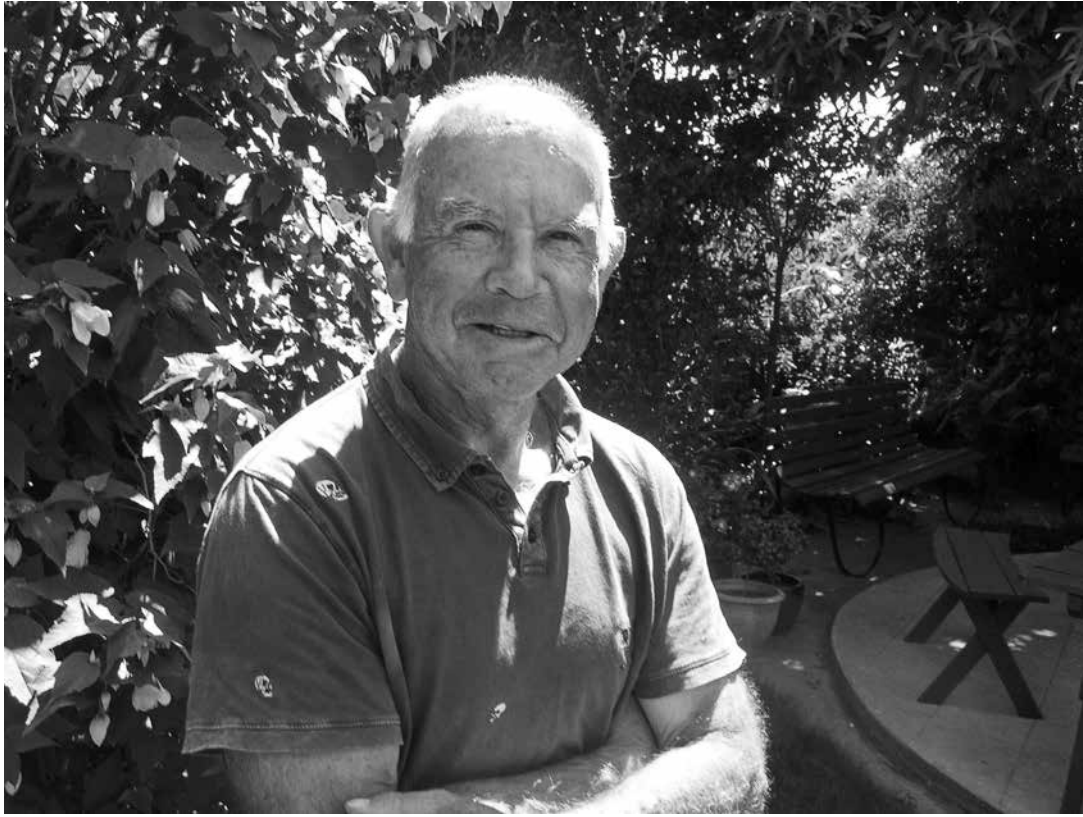


Photo Adrienne Tatham

When Council finally appointed a Curator for our park in 2006 after years of lobbying from the Friends, it was Chris who was put in charge, and now after twelve years at the helm Chris has decided retirement would allow him time to address other pursuits.

With his background in parks, education and administration Chris was well suited to update much of the infrastructure within the Park. He soon developed his interest in the birds and animals as well as the plants and trees and part of his job which took up many hours was to be a senior manager of the Zoo, which took up a good proportion of his time. Many improvements were made to the Park during his stewardship, such as the entrance changes and the Tea House area improvements.

The Friends found we could discuss all kinds of problems and sometimes even solve some! He always said how he appreciated the volunteer work we undertake in the Park and how he wished for more groups to be involved. Chris has helped us by leading monthly walks around the park, bringing to our attention some of the many facets of his management issues, usually hidden from the public. His relationship with the press kept the park in the public eye and resulted in many people following up on this publicity. His sagas concerning ducks and animals always drew people to the Park.

Chris has appreciated the opportunity to manage the Park and describes it as the highlight of his working career. Now it is time to pause and move on as he retires and is able to choose his new path. No doubt tending his grandchildren and surfing will be top of the list of things to do.

We will miss him, but need to move on. Thanks Chris for always listening to the needs of the Friends and for all the work you put into the Park.

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Fernery and Display Houses - constant change

Donna Christiansen

Technical Officer Fernery and Display Houses

One of the most constant features in the Fernery and Display Houses is change. This excludes our great team members of course. We are one of the main instigators of the changes along with the environment – and of course the budget!

We are always aspiring to develop the environment to produce high-quality display plants and create inspiring displays to showcase our diverse plant collections, and provide a tranquil and breath-taking visit through New Plymouth's unique major attraction.

The Fernery and Display Houses opened in January 1928, so 90 years of change has occurred. What started out as a collection of native ferns is now a myriad of plants in a modern and up to date conservatory with more than 50,000 visitors a year.

The most significant change in the last 12 years that I have been here is the rebuilding of the administration building and new growing facilities in 2012/13. There has been a huge improvement in the production side of growing plants with the new potting shed, new propagation house and standing-out areas.

The new heating system in the tropical house and glass house growing areas has enabled the subtropical plants to thrive in all seasons instead of declining during the cooler months.

The redevelopment of the racecourse walk and main entrance into the fernery brought a stylish and low-maintenance addition. I remember having to rake the dusty gravel every morning only for someone to scuff it all up within minutes. The redevelopment of the Horton Walk entrance, completed last year, is now an enticing way in that complements what's inside the display houses.

The introduction of the pavilion in the tropical house is enjoyed every day by the visitors. Water features that add interest through movement and sound complement the setting, the latest being our large feature that was installed in house three in July this year.

Smaller changes have been the installation of watering mats in growing areas, and introducing new crops for flowering displays over a longer periods of time.

Sweep fans installed in the annex and tropical house to assist with air movement will increase the plants' ability to withstand the harsh conditions of high humidity and existing in close proximity to other plants. Plants are so demanding!

One of the environmental challenges, which we're continuing to work on, is the diminishing light levels due to the large native trees growing around the perimeter of the fernery compound, which affects our plants' growth.

Every day something is changing. From the daily renewal of a few plants to altering how we use them in displays, to our need to respond to the challenges of the facility's environment, we are forever finding new ways to keep the Fernery and Display Houses in tip-top condition.



Photos Derek Hughes

The Brooklands Chimney

Adrienne Tatham

The chimney standing sentinel on the lawn at Brooklands is all that remains of the home of Captain Henry King Esq.. The house was built of timber and has been described as a long low L shaped building. The household was renowned for the warm and welcoming atmosphere within.

Captain King was born on 7 April 1783 at Torquay in Devonshire, England. At the ripe old age of 12 years and 8 months he joined the Royal Navy as midshipman aboard the *Namur*. Two years later he was present at the battle of St. Vincent as the *Namur* formed part of the fleet under the command of Admiral Sir John Jervis who was afterwards named Lord St. Vincent.

Captain King served 5 years aboard this ship, and left with the rank of third lieutenant, having acquitted himself well. He then served on the *Canopus* and was promoted to second lieutenant. Following this he was appointed to serve on *Ambuscade* and later on *Unite*. It was while he was on this ship that he broke his leg in three places when the topsail tie fell on him, so he was invalided off the vessel. On his recovery he was appointed first lieutenant of the *Sea Horse* under the captaincy of Sir Alex Gordon and served with her in the Potomac and at the taking of Alexandria in the American War of 1812-14. The *Sea Horse* was ordered to convoy a number of merchantmen carrying corn, cotton, and tobacco from Alexandria and the ship safely conducted the fleet through the midst of the enemy. This service was the key to his promotion to the rank of commander having been recommended by Sir Alexander Gordon who spoke of the Captain's work on *Sea Horse* at Chesapeake Bay in 1814. He said "So universally good was the conduct of the officers, seamen and marines of the detachment, that I cannot particularise with justice to the rest, but I owe the long tried experience I have had of Mr Henry King, first lieutenant of the *Sea Horse*, to point out to you that such was his eagerness to take the part to which his abilities would have directed him on this occasion, that he even came out of his sickbed to command at his quarters, while the ship was passing the batteries. The first two guns pointed by Lieutenant King disabled each a gun of the enemy." Shortly after this proclamation Captain King retired from active service and in March 1852 he was gazetted post captain on the retired list. He went home to Devonshire where he soon became actively involved as a barge master on the Bude and Holsworthy Canal, conveying a shelly sand from the coast to the interior where it was used as a fertiliser.

When the Plymouth Company was established for colonising New Zealand he was appointed Chief Commissioner and he travelled to the colony with his wife (Mary Cutfield) and son, William Cutfield King, then aged 8, on the *Amelia Thompson*, which arrived in New Plymouth on September 3, 1841. He apparently rowed ashore in the ship's cutter with his son and one or two other emigrants, who were greatly disappointed that there was no harbour here. It was stated that he suddenly appeared when no ship was evident to which the voyage could be attributed. The *Amelia Thompson* had left England on 25th March, had been to Port Nicholson (Wellington) for a month or so and lay becalmed 25 miles to the southward from whence the gallant Captain (principal agent) had arrived at Moturoa at dusk in the boat. Those remaining on board became impatient with the enforced delay when they were within hailing distance of their destination. He advised that many on board the ship wished to draw up a protest against the place as having no harbour, but that the majority considered that useless as being too late.

On his arrival he was appointed Police Magistrate and this was published in the Wellington Gazette of September 1841. When the Plymouth and New Zealand Companies were amalgamated he was superseded in his commissionership by Captain Liardet, RN.

He was granted one of the first six choices in a ballot of sections in the fledgling town of New Plymouth and chose Brooklands, which he shared with his brother in law, Mr George Cutfield, who had been employed as a naval architect in the Plymouth Dockyard. He obtained 2 fifty acre sections at first, then the two added more land as it became available. Between them they had cultivated about 70 acres.

Kaimata was the Maori name for Brooklands and it is likely that the name refers to a big feast held in a clearing, probably near the old puriri which for many years sported a huge blackened scar at the base.

Brooklands was at that time an urban or rural lot just beyond the town Belt and the area developed quickly. The house was completed by 1843, with the timber being pit sawn on the property. The land became the first farm

formed in the fledgling settlement. A garden and orchard were soon established and some of the largest trees in the park were planted in the decade of 1840 – 50. Some of these trees remain today. Merino sheep and cattle were introduced in 1842 following the Captain's trip to Sydney on *Jupiter* (his passage cost £12) and tradition has it that the first pound of butter made in Taranaki was made at Brooklands. By 1845 the land produced 60 bushells of wheat to the acre, an excellent harvest. After this last trip away Captain King never left the settlement. Many settler farmers established their own herds from the Brooklands breeding stock.



Captain King was appointed Resident Magistrate and acted as Government factotum for many years and in that time committed only one person for trial, the European settlers being so crime free. But the conduct of the natives required the utmost discretion. The small number of peaceful farmers who at that time formed almost the entire European population of the settlement, poor and defenceless, were at the mercy of a band of insolent slaves and returned Maori refugees and the brave and judicious old Captain handled them with diplomacy. Threats were made to Captain King in June of 1849, for he was the appointed Protector of Aborigines and claimed the right to select sections for the Maoris.

He was also agent for Captain Bulkeley who owned a section of river bank where a party of natives cut away a large quantity of timber and when the Captain endeavoured to stop the devastation the natives treated him with ridicule and defiance. He had to adjudicate on disputes between European and Maori in an atmosphere which was becoming increasingly touchy as Maori opposition grew to the continued land sales, but he was noted for his wisdom, tact and fairness. In 1852 Captain King retired from active life as Resident Magistrate and J.P., the settlers presenting him with a piece of silver plate as a token of the recognition of his service to their community.

In March 1860, with the breaking out of the Maori rebellion, he and his family had to retreat from the villa at Brooklands to live in the town. Their home was subsequently ransacked by the Maori insurgents and when the latter returned some time later, they burned it down, leaving only the chimney standing. The remains of this fireplace show how large the hearth was, with an iron bar to carry backlogs, with another above the fire for hanging pots and kettles on, and the smaller bread oven set into the back wall of the fireplace.

During the time when the family lived in the town, the farm kept producing sheep and cows for the meat and milk for the town supply. The jobs of shepherding and milking were undertaken by the Taranaki Volunteers and Taranaki Militia.

During his retirement he became more and more infirm and died on June 6 1874 at the age of 91 years. The whole community was affected by the death and much of the town closed on the day of his funeral, four days later. The flag at Mount Eliot (Pukeariki) was flown at half mast to signify that a chief had fallen. The Government Office was closed on June 10, the day of his funeral. He had come to live a second life of thirty three years in the wilderness which was the colony, a hale and hearty man of fifty eight who gave his share of the arduous work, excitement and perils of a pioneer.

His only child, Captain William Cutfield King was killed by a party of rebels in ambush, within sight of a garrison of British troops on Marsland Hill. William had ridden out to his farm at Woodleigh to check on his cattle. At that time the family were confined to the town for safety. He refused to compel some of the women of the settlement to leave their husbands and embark for Nelson. William was 32 years old, married with two daughters and had recently been elected to represent the Grey and Bell Districts in the General Assembly, a brave and promising man. Shortly after he had ridden onto the farm on horseback he was shot at and wounded by ambushing Maori rebels. With his horse also wounded he dismounted and was chased and fell. His murderers ran up and he told them he was badly wounded and to leave him, but Hori Kiwi then discharged both barrels of his gun at his head. When an armed party was sent to recover the body the Maoris had long gone and the farmhouse was in flames. There is a monument erected at the corner of Beaumont Street in his honour, but he is buried in the family plot at St. Mary's churchyard.

On March 3 1861, a few weeks later, a party of 14 Rifle Volunteers were looking for peaches and other fruit, and were gathering some from the King's orchard at Brooklands when they were fired upon from behind a hedge. One man was wounded and Edward Messenger was fatally shot. One Maori was killed and another wounded as the surviving Volunteers made their escape.

It was a fortnight later when the Brooklands house, barns and stables and other outbuildings went up in flames two days before agreement for a truce was reached in Waitara .

The History of Taranaki B.Wells 1878.

The Establishment of the New Plymouth Settlement in New Zealand 1841 – 1843. J. Rutherford and W.H.Skinner.



Photo Derek Hughes

The Minor Mystery of George Rhind's Gates

Ron Lambert

The present cast-iron gates at the Victoria Road entrance to the park were originally at the Liardet Street entrance. They were moved after the present Sanders' Gates were erected in 1938.

This, then, is the story of the 'Hughes' Gates'.

After its September 1884 meeting, the Recreation Grounds Board announced that a gift of "double iron gates" for the park's Liardet Street entrance was to be made by a local resident "but at the donor's request his name was not mentioned." (TH 20 Sept 1884) The gates were then made by Mr Revell, a local blacksmith and were installed in early 1885. It seems very likely that the 'local resident' concerned was George Rhind¹, an engineer who was later thanked by the Board for his generosity at their meeting in April 1886. (TH 10 April 1886)

It's most unlikely that George's blacksmith's-made gates survived the plan to install "ornamental gates" at the Liardet Street entrance six years later. It seems that the 1885 gates may even have then been described as 'primitive'! (TH 25 Nov 1890) It was in early 1890, that the Taranaki Herald reported "the plans for the new gates ... have been prepared [for free] by Mr Mofflin², and according to them the work will be a very handsome one when finished." The paper continued on to note that Robert Hughes Senior³ - father of Robert Clinton Hughes, the park's 'founder' - was collecting subscriptions for the project and that "as soon as he can get sufficient funds in hand, the gates will be proceeded with." (TH 1 March 1890) But, only a few days later, Hughes contacted the paper to announce that he was suspending the appeal for the gate funds. He suggested that locals should, instead, urgently help the many families between Inglewood and New Plymouth whose houses and stock had just been destroyed in a large bush-fire which raged through the area during the first few days of March. (TH 7 March 1890). By September that year, however, Hughes was calling tenders for the "Removal of the Gate [the Rhind gate?] and Erecting an Ornamental Fence from Liardet Street to the Recreation Grounds." (TH 30 Sept 1890). Messrs Moon and Brooks were subsequently awarded the construction contract and by October the Herald was "pleased to observe that the gate is nearly finished." (TH 27 Oct 1890) The new ornamental iron gates that have been erected at the Liardet-street entrance of the Recreation Grounds, are a decided improvement on the primitive structure that used to serve the same purpose. The thanks of the community are due to Mr R. Hughes, sen, for the improvement, as that gentleman warmly took up the matter of erecting new gates, and by diligent canvas he raised sufficient money to cover all costs. (TH 25 Nov 1890) Early the following year Hughes published the subscription list and costs associated with the project. He had raised £29-3-0 from around 160 people. The construction and other costs were £28-18-6. The balance of 4/6d was duly passed on to the Rec Board. (TH 9 March 1891) As mentioned earlier, it was after the Sanders' Gates were erected that the central iron portion of the Hughes' Gates was moved to the Victoria Road entrance.



The Hughes' Gates at the Liardet St Entrance, c 1896. ARC20003-859/3



The Hughes' Gates Victoria Road Entrance

SUBSCRIPTIONS, ROBERT T. HUGHES, ON ACCOUNT.			
Cr.	£	s.	d.
By Moon and Brooks' Contract	24	10	0
Moon and Brooks, extras	0	12	6
Moon, additional side wall	2	0	0
Okey & Arnold, contract painting	0	15	0
Okey & Arnold, extras	0	7	6
A. Davidson, 1 load stones	0	2	0
Reed, day's work	0	6	0
2 Men, labor	0	2	0
Cab hire, self	0	2	0
Postage	0	1	6
	£28	18	6
Balance handed to the Board	0	4	6
	£29	3	0

Payments for Erection of Gates - Taranaki Herald, 9 March 1891

- 1 Rhind, George: A civil engineer contracted from 1881 to 1889 to superintended the construction of the Breakwater at New Plymouth port.
- 2 Mofflin, Arthur (1842 - 1928) New Plymouth architect & draughtsman - also responsible for finishing the Rec's Band Rotunda the following year.
- 3 Hughes, Robert: (1821-1914) Businessman. Arrived in NZ 1846 and to NP in 1850. His son, Robert Clinton, was a New Plymouth solicitor and 'founding father' of Pukekura Park.

Clematis in the Park

Val Smith

Clematis is a genus of around 300 species within the buttercup family Ranunculaceae. Members of the family have showy insect-pollinated flowers, and are mostly annual, perennial, aquatic or climbing plants found in temperate or cooler regions of the world. Attractive garden plants in the family include buttercup, clematis, anemone, columbine, love-in-the-mist, larkspur and winter rose. Mainly occurring in the mountains, the buttercup genus *Ranunculus*,



Photos Val Smith

Above: *Clematis paniculata* (female) seed heads.

Below: *Ranunculus nivicola*.

with about 40 native and 13 naturalised species, accounts for most of the members of this family in the New Zealand flora. Most, including our Egmont buttercup *Ranunculus nivicola*, have glossy yellow petals. However, the largest and most memorable is *Ranunculus lyalli*, for many years known erroneously as the Mount Cook “lily”, with stems up to a metre tall, glossy dinner-plate leaves and large pure-white flowers with golden stamens. Although palatable to animals, it is still common in the Hooker Valley in Aoraki/Mt Cook, around the Homer Tunnel in Fiordland and at Temple Basin, Arthur’s Pass, where frequent visitors deter grazing wildlife.

Our single native anemone has inconspicuous small reddish-brown flowers, and grows mainly in alpine areas of the South Island. Much better known are the garden species, such as *Anemone coronaria* or windflower from the Mediterranean region, with showy red, blue or purple blooms grown mainly for decoration. At the other end of the scale, the dainty European woodland *Anemone nemorosa* can sometimes be spotted in Pukekura Park’s Stainton Dell.



The genus name *Clematis* is from the ancient Greek *clématis* ('a climbing plant') and was in use long before Carl Linnaeus adopted and published it in *Species Plantarum* in 1737. Most species are referred to by that name, although the pronunciation varies. The genus comprises some 250 species worldwide, mainly vigorous woody vines or lianes, which are quite fragile until established. The leaves are opposite and divided into leaflets and leaf stalks that twist and curl around supporting structures to anchor the plant as it climbs. Some species are shrubby, while others are herbaceous perennial plants. The cool temperate species are deciduous, but many of the warmer climate species are evergreen.

Several decades ago, I was attracted to an unusual clematis growing quite vigorously near the Brooklands zoo entrance. Different from any other clematis I had known, it had velvety, prominently veined leaves and pale greenish bell-shaped flowers. Unfortunately it became a victim of the later upgrade of the area, and I didn't see it again. Park records indicate it was *Clematis grewiflora*, from Taihape horticulturist Ron Gordon, who probably grew it from seed collected in Nepal.

From time to time more colourful and flamboyant hybrid clematises are brought out to the display houses in the park. The first of these hybrids, *Clematis 'jackmanii'*, was produced from crosses made by the prominent Surrey (England) nurseryman George Jackman (1837–1887) and introduced in 1862. *Clematis* 'The President', another deciduous vine, is one of many more recent and successful early-flowered cultivars that have proved both popular and challenging to grow.

Our nine native clematis species are nearly all climbers and probably the best-known flowers of the New Zealand forest. First discovered in 1773 at Queen Charlotte Sound by Johannes and George Forster on Cook's second voyage, *Clematis paniculata* ('bearing panicles' – loosely branching clusters of flowers) is the largest member of the genus in New Zealand. Who has not admired the festoons of starry white flowers draping the bush along the roadsides of Mount Messenger in early spring, or on the approach to North Egmont up to several months later? The New Zealand species are unusual in the genus in being dioecious – having male and female flowers on separate plants. Remarkable also for their size, purity and elegance, the flowers have no petals, the sepals acting as protection for the reproduction organs. The male flowers are larger and showier than the female flowers, which are insect-pollinated. The hairy styles of the female flowers elongate as the attached seeds ripen, and are carried away on the wind. Pre-European Māori revered *clematis*, puawhānanga, as a sacred flower heralding the coming warmth of spring, and women adorned themselves with various clematis species, sometimes when in mourning. Medicinally, a short stem of *Clematis paniculata* was cut off and the sap used on wounds, and the peppery leaves were chewed for toothache.

On my early rambles in Pukekura Park, especially those in or looking across to "bush" areas, I sometimes felt something was missing. Then in early September 2013 I found it! Seen from near the top of Brooklands Drive as a smudge of light-coloured vegetation to the right of the lake, proved on closer inspection to be *Clematis paniculata* in full and perfect flower as it scrambled over a large hebe and on to the chain-mesh netting of the security-gate. Sensing its vulnerability even then, I took several photos, hoping to do justice to this memorable moment. It seemed that my fears were justified when a year or two later I found the once-flourishing clematis reduced to a few shortened leafless stems – probably dead! Wrong! In mid-August 2017 it was flowering again, restricted (along with several others) to the high netting fence, but already reaching for the native trees towering above and beyond.

At the other end of the popularity stakes, the European *Clematis vitalba* is an unwelcome intruder in Pukekura Park. Commonly known as traveller's joy or old man's beard, it was brought to New Zealand around 1920 as an ornamental plant, quickly escaped from gardens and soon became naturalised. It has spread rapidly in recent years and large infestations now pose a serious threat to New Zealand's native bush. Control is difficult, labour-intensive and expensive ...



Above: *Anemone nemorosa* in Stainton Dell.

Left: *Clematis paniculata* (male flowers) on Brooklands Bowl gate.

Below left: *Clematis paniculata* (male flowers) on Brooklands Bowl fence.

Below right: *Clematis* cultivar in Pukekura Park display house

Photos Val Smith



Changing of the guard

Adrienne Tatham

Enter Kristian Davies.

Replacing Chris as Park Lead (Curator) is a young man of 42 who hails from the Waitakere Ranges in Auckland.

After attending Green Bay High School he studied Horticulture Science at Unitech. On the completion of this course Kristian was successful in getting a three-year apprenticeship at the Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens. When the role of camellia and magnolia collection curator became available, he applied and was appointed. Kristian made significant changes in the collection, and gained invaluable knowledge to steer him through his horticultural path.

Following this learning period he did his OE, spending some time in Indonesia after which he worked in the Japanese ski fields during the winter while gardening in London during the summer. Following this Kristian established his own landscape business which he operated for 15 years,

employing staff and finding out about owning his own business, while also building relationships with customers and suppliers. He operated primarily in the North London area, but also travelled to areas such as Kensington, Notting Hill and joked about gardening by postcode, as his many customers shared this feature. Of course many English gardens are very structured with clipped shrubs and trees and well-kept lawns sporting mowing stripes. Others were more modern with a few feature plants, climbers such as Star Jasmine to green up the brick walls, and clipped Buxus to highlight the Georgian and Victorian architecture and the contemporary interior of the properties. He hopes to improve on the gardens of Pukekura and expand plant collections as is fitting for a Botanic Garden.

We will watch with interest as he finds a balance in his job with all the meetings and administration his position will require of him, but surely he will be seen with dirt under his nails and secateurs in hand, helping his gardeners attain his dreams.



Photo Adrienne Tatham

Learn more about the adorable capuchin monkey

**Jolene West
Keeper**



Originating from South and Central America our Brooklands Zoo team are kept busy caring for six capuchin monkeys. Capuchins are smart social animals who live in large groups. They are tool users and mimic the keepers by using sticks to try to ‘unlock’ the padlocks. To keep them busy and encourage them to use their skills the staff provide whole coconuts that they have to figure out how to break open using rocks. Once they’ve ‘cracked it’ they are rewarded with fresh coconut milk and flesh.

Capuchins are omnivores – they eat fruit, nuts, vegetables and meat. Occasionally a wild bird will get eaten by the troop if they are not quick enough to escape the capuchin’s habitat.

Capuchins are very good climbers and love to jump from one branch to another. Their tail is an extra limb that they use to hang upside down. The other primates at the zoo (cotton top tamarins and squirrel monkeys) use their tails for balance when jumping from branch to branch.

Recently Rob Mills, a veterinarian from the New Plymouth Vet Group, came on site to microchip the youngest capuchin and determine its gender. The keepers were very excited to learn that Mani is a female, the first at Brooklands for a while as recently the other infants have been male.