

The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park

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Spring is well and truly in the air
Quercus robur (English Oak) bursting into leaf

Photo Derek Hughes

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Fourth of July

Ian Hutchinson
Botanical Records Officer

The fourth of July this year was the 126th anniversary for some trees in the park.

In the Taranaki Herald 10 April 1886, it was reported that at the Friday evening meeting of the Recreation Grounds Board, which was the previous evening, “A packet of seeds was received from the Government. The seeds are principally of forest trees and flowering shrubs.”

On Wednesday 4 July 1888, it was reported in the Taranaki Herald that, “The Recreation Board are at present adding a considerable number of trees to the grounds. The trees are all new to this place, being the product of American seed forwarded by the Government to the Board some three years ago.”

The above report, which was very cutely written on American Independence Day, set me thinking what American trees are growing in Pukekura that could be likely suspects for the trees mentioned. Well the suspects that I came up with, interestingly enough, all share something in common in that they come from California. The trees are *Cupressus macrocarpa*, *Pinus torreyana*, *Sequoia sempervirens*, and *Sequoiadendron giganteum*.

So where can you find these trees in the park?

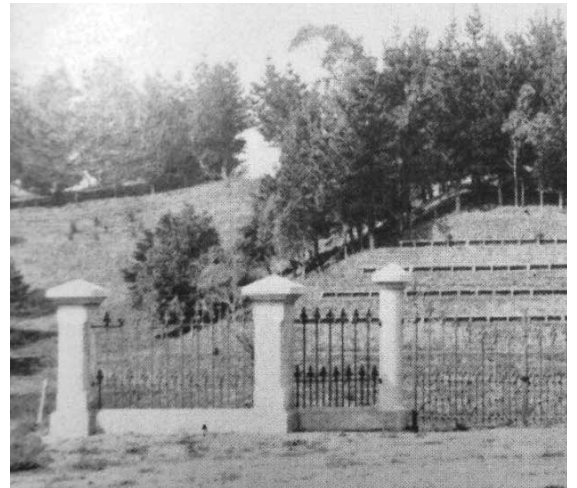
The *Cupressus macrocarpa* that remain from these plantings can be found in King Fern Gully and in between the sports ground’s southern terrace and Claffey Walk. These show as young trees in a photograph taken from the main entrance at Fillis Street dated circa 1890. Macrocarpa trees had also been planted in the area that is now the children’s playground, near the rubber tree on Hughes Walk (which incidentally blocked off a ‘glow worm cave’ when it fell over) in the clearing on the Upper Hughes Walk below the oak trees and on Racecourse Walk.

Three *Pinus torreyana* were originally planted, two on Hughes Walk between the Victoria Road entrance and the playground there, and one on Cannon Hill behind the cricket pavilion. There is only one survivor out of these three trees and it is one of the pair planted on Hughes Walk. The second tree of the pair on Hughes Walk was struck by lightning in 1994, and the resulting scar led to decay in the trunk and concerns about the structural safety of the tree so it was eventually removed in 2004. The third specimen on Cannon Hill was also considered to be unsafe and was removed in June 2006.

Pinus torreyana is on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and is ranked as critically endangered. When the Cannon Hill tree was removed in 2006, some cones were collected and viable seed from the cones were sown and raised. Two young trees are the result of that seed and these were planted out in 2012 on Cannon Hill: one next to the original parent stump and the second on the bank above the concrete storage bin. This is good news and is helping to ensure the continued survival of this species – our bit for conservation.

Sequoia sempervirens, or coast redwood, was planted on the hillside above Hughes Walk adjacent to Number 25 Victoria Road. There are two survivors out of three at this location. The other location where one was planted is at the foot of Cannon Hill directly behind where the pavilion toilets are now.

The last of the suspects is the Californian Big Tree, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*. From records that we have about notable trees, it would appear that there were three planted originally and this species is still represented by two survivors. They can be found next to the old Curators Office car parking spaces and on the left-hand side of the drive from the old Curators Office leading to the Tea House next to the Rhododendron ‘Sir Robert Peel’. The third tree was growing in the main car park next to the Norfolk Island hibiscus. It was damaged in 1988 by



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From the Archives cont'd

Cyclone Bola and a piece blew out of the tree, hitting a nearby vehicle. The damage revealed that there was rot in the main stem and this led to the tree being determined a safety risk and it was therefore removed. You can still see the stump at the foot of the bank.



1924, and in it the *Sequoiadendron* and coast redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*, are clearly visible along with the first sports ground pavilion. In the second photograph the *Sequoiadendron* appears to be nearly double the size when compared with the first image.

Here's to our American stars of 1888, 126 years young.

Interestingly I have copies of early photographs of the main car park area, which I got printed off at the local Stamp Shop from old post cards. The earlier of the two images is labelled Pukekura Park which places this image around 1907 as that's when the park changed to the name Pukekura Park from Recreation Grounds, and the Californian Big Tree clearly shows in the photo. The size of the tree would be consistent with the tree having been planted in 1888, it obviously appears to have a growth rate similar to that of *Pinus radiata*. The second photo I have is of the same location dated



Left: *Sequoiadendron giganteum* near the old curator's office.

Below: Young *Pinus torreyana* next to parent tree stump on Cannon Hill.



Photos Derek Hughes

Origins and Evolution of the Festival of Lights in Pukekura Park.

**George Fuller
Past Curator**

I have been asked to give a summary of the origins and evolution of the lighting displays and entertainments which have become such a major feature of the Park's summer attractions.

The war years of 1939-45 impacted heavily on the Park with unavoidable neglect tarnishing its image. The condition was causing serious concern.

In 1949 Thomas Horton, the great planter of trees, retired and his position as Superintendent was taken up by John Goodwin. He brought with him valuable knowledge from experience gained while at the Christchurch Parks and Reserves Department and Massey Agricultural College (now University). His brief - 'Bring people back into the Park!' 1952 saw the establishment of the New Plymouth Borough Council Parks Department largely as a consequence of his efforts. His solution was to emphasise and indeed exploit the presence of water by introducing amongst other things a fountain, a waterfall, and a waterwheel.

By 1953 he had made a brilliant start but with ambitious plans to introduce these features to fully exploit the significance of water he had ruffled a few illustrious feathers. It was made clear that some wished that "he should return to Canterbury from whence he came", feeling 'natural' beauty was under serious threat.

In 1957 he was granted study leave to attend in London the inaugural meeting of the International Federation of Parks and Recreation. He was the N.Z. delegate and took every opportunity to glean information about what was happening in the Parks and Zoos of the United Kingdom. His main inspiration came in the spectacle of illumination of trees. On his return he convinced the committee that ten flood lights should be purchased in order to illuminate trees plus a string of coloured lights to span around the lower Main Lake to exploit its reflective potential.

In order to have the lighting installed, assistance was required from the then Electricity Department of the New Plymouth Borough Council. Coincidentally the Department was already experimenting with the illumination of feature buildings in Devon Street during summer. This initiated the Festival of the Lights in the Park. There evolved a very dynamic rapport between the staff of the two departments. In the following summer when the time came to install the lighting, as if by a miracle, the staff of the Electricity Department turned up with extra lighting features. The concept grew wings and gained in both size and popularity each year, then came Daylight Saving with an extra hour of daylight at dusk! We overcame that by inviting any group or organisation to come up to the Park and display to the public their particular activity, free of charge. This was the origin of the Summer Scene as it became known.

This past summer of 2013-14 somehow came to be claimed erroneously as the 60th Anniversary of decorative lighting in the Park. That would make 1953 as the founding year. Even if the fountain is taken as 'decorative lighting', it was not functional until 1955. The summer of 2013 -14 marked the 60th Anniversary of the Queen's visit, but the only decorative lights in the Park then would have been a string of streetlights between the Main Gate and the Shortland Street entrance via The Bandstand.



More Shags in the Park.

Val Smith



Since my chance close encounter with an immature black shag on the Pukekura Park boat landing in March 2014, I have been keeping my eyes peeled for sightings of the little shag, kawaupaka (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos brevirostris*) which breeds in the park.

At around two-thirds the size of the black shag, the little shag is New Zealand's smallest, measuring 56 cm long and weighing about 700 grams – a little larger and heavier than keruru, our native pigeon. Kawaupaka is found throughout New Zealand, with between 5,000 and 10,000 breeding pairs. It is the most common shag species in Taranaki, and is protected. Its plumage is highly variable from

glossy black to pied, with various white front markings, and the younger birds are dull blackish-brown. All have short, stubby bills, yellow in adults, dark in juveniles, brown eyes and black feet. Adults have yellow facial skin and a small black crest on the forehead. The tail is long, compared with the little black shag, and the Australian subspecies that sometimes reaches New Zealand shores is only pied.

Equally at home in sheltered coastal waters or streams, lakes and ponds, the little shag feeds on its own or in small loose groups, on a diet of fish, koura (freshwater crayfish), smelt, bullies and sometimes frogs and tadpoles. However, more gregarious when roosting or breeding, it lives in colonies of up to 200 nests, usually in large trees. Two to five pale blue-green eggs are laid between August and February and are incubated by both parents for about four weeks. The young fledge after about two months.

The first recorded observations of little shags nesting at Pukekura Park were made in February 2000 by local ornithologists David Medway and Rosemary and Bill Messenger. 14 birds were seen flying into pine trees near Fountain Lake and four nests were observed. In September that year the little shags, in their three phases, were back, and at least twelve nests were located in trees around Fountain Lake. Regular observations up to April 2013, mainly by David, showed fluctuating numbers of nesting pairs, peaking in 2008 with over twenty nests counted. The following season an estimated more than 50 young were reared. Nesting began at the end of August into September, and finished in autumn (March-April), sometimes after a 'second wave' of breeding. A few dead chicks and eggs have been found under the trees at various times of the year, but not in disturbing numbers. During the thirteen years of monitoring, the colony spread from the *torreyana* pine near the lower lake to totara, kowhai, rimu, oak and a yew in the vicinity of both the Fountain and the Boating Lakes.

My own bird watching has been rather hit-but-mostly-miss on my walks in and through the park. In the autumn at the end of March and into April this year I saw and tried to photograph a solitary juvenile kawaupaka at a regular favoured spot at the top end of Fountain Lake, discreetly mingling with the many resting ducks. Occasionally one could be recognised foraging in the lake, swimming with uptilted head and body low in the water, and then diving for interminable lengths of time before emerging some distance away. More recently, when coming through at dusk, I have counted up to seven birds settling down to roost, silhouetted against the light in the branches of an overhanging kowhai. Now, at the start of the breeding season, I must listen as well as look, for apparently both sexes make a loud coo-coo-coo and uh-aah at the nest, and later, high-pitched begging calls are made by the chicks.

As the only recorded nesting colony of the species in Taranaki, the little shags in Pukekura Park are yet another facet of the Park worthy of further study and monitoring. My hope is that someone willing and able will take it on board and continue from where David left off so suddenly last year.



Photos Val Smith

Stan Lay Drive

Ormond Greensill



What could be more appropriate than naming the main entry to Pukekura Park as Stan Lay Drive? For several decades the late Stan Lay guided the activities of the New Plymouth Amateur Athletic and Cycling club as they conducted weekly sports events on the adjacent sports ground.

But it was probably for much more significant achievements that Stan's name was given to this well used strip of road. Was it in recognition of Stan's twelve New Zealand Javelin championship titles? Or perhaps his representation of New Zealand at Empire and Olympic Games, or more probably again, for his induction into the New Zealand Sports Hall of Fame? Whatever was the catalyst for the naming of Stan Lay Drive, we all recognise that here is a man who performed to the highest ideals of amateur sport, and worthily represented his country overseas, as well as being the flag bearer for New Zealand at the Empire Games in Canada.

Other honours enjoyed by Stan include:-

1. The taking of the Oath of Allegiance on behalf of all competitors at the 1950 Empire Games in Auckland.
2. Receiving, in 1975 a City of New Plymouth Citizen's award.
3. Being awarded the M.B.E. in 1987.
4. Being elected Taranaki Centre Patron of the New Zealand Amateur Athletics Association.
5. In 2000 being appointed the official spiritual guardian of the Olympic Flame during its journey through New Zealand, on its way to the Games in Sydney.
6. Being given Life Membership of Hawera Athletic Club, Stratford Athletic club, New Plymouth Athletic club, Taranaki Centre of NZAAA, West Coast centre of NZAAA.



Gold medal at the British Empire Games at Ontario in 1930.

Through my own involvement in amateur athletics I was fortunate enough to encounter Stan regularly, to admire his dedication, his unstinting assistance and to enjoy his friendship.

And it was not only as an athlete that Stan shone – he represented Taranaki at Cricket from 1925-1930, has a century to his credit and was renowned as an outstanding fielder.

When I walk down Stan Lay Drive I invariably remember this very talented sportsman who left such a legacy to Taranaki.

Pukekura Park Wanderers Walk August 18

Julie Hunt

The winter weather had made itself felt during the early part of the month with driving rain and cold temperatures, but on Monday 18th August it was a lovely mild mid-winter morning for the Park Wanderers to enjoy the *Camellias* on show. Yvette Batten, a Midweek photographer and journalist, had recently published an article supported by a photograph of the Park Wanderers enjoying the July walk. This article had obviously been read by a large number of people as we had twenty three people turn up for the August walk – with at least twelve new people coming along for the first time. The popular Midweek weekly paper reinforced the upcoming walk with a prominent boxed notice posted inside the cover of the latest issue, with several walkers drawing attention to having read the message printed there.

With Lynn Bublitz unavailable on the day, Adrienne Tatham stepped up to the plate to lead the walk. After greeting the large group of walkers gathered at Bellringer Pavilion, she led us on some of the original established pathways around the lakes and Park that had been planted out many years ago with some fine *Camellia* specimens, the first of these being *Camellia japonica* 'Pukekura', a relatively late newcomer. The immediate view across the lake through the fountain to the Japanese Hillside was tinged with pinks and reds as *Azaleas* began their display, contrasting with the delicate whites and creams of *Pieris* shrubs. Over this next month this particular part of the Park will be a magnificent feature.

Several single flowered species *Camellias* followed with *C. sasanqua* 'Maiden's Blush' a favourite with the tuis near the little bridge. Those taking part stopped to admire the *Camellia* apples, the seeds and their shells as they poked around in the debris beneath the tree. Two species *Camellia* grow near the corner of the next walk (Hughes Walk), they are *C. grijii* and *C. transkonoensis*, both in full flower, the latter covered with small flowers less than ten centimetres across. We continued on our way through the park stopping regularly to admire the extensive variety of *Camellias* in flower, some with small single blooms and others with large showy petals and thick yellow stamens, past the Fernery and up the Racecourse Drive to the Stainton Dell. One particular *Camellia* worth a mention was the bright yellow *C. nitidissima* (formerly *chrysantha*), which was coming into flower. The buds form on the underside of the branches and hang down beneath the handsome shiny leaves. Excitement reigned as someone in the group found a spent bloom of pure gold lying beneath the tree.

This walk finished on the Fernery Lawn and Adrienne gave a brief run down on Friends of Pukekura Park and what they did, and passed around a clip board for those who wanted to join and be added to the mailing list. There were eight of these. She then extended an invitation to all those who took part to wind up the morning with refreshments at the Teahouse, and twelve of us took up the invitation.

We moved from the Wairarapa to New Plymouth 18 months ago and are really enjoying the change of gardening conditions and seasons. From very hot dry summers and very cold frosty (even snow) of the Wairarapa, to the more temperate and frost free climate of New Plymouth. A keen gardener and walker, I have enjoyed being able to combine these two activities by becoming a Friend of Pukekura Park and joining in with their regular guided walks through such a magnificent public garden.

Julie Hunt



Photo Adrienne Tatham

Opening of our Sister City Garden in Kunming

Chris Connolly

On August 13th I flew to Kunming in China to oversee the final preparation of our sister city garden in Kunming, before its official opening, planned for Tuesday August 19th.

In May 2013 I had spent several weeks in Kunming working with the local Landscape Bureau building the garden and planting it, using a selection of New Zealand native plants which we had previously exported to China for this purpose. The site we had been allocated for our garden a number of years earlier is in the Golden Temple Garden, located on the northern outskirts of Kunming City.

When I arrived there this year I was anxious to visit the garden to see how it had fared over the last year and what sort of condition it was in. I arrived on site early Friday morning and was concerned there had been little maintenance carried out in recent times. In addition to this the pohutukawa trees had not survived, which was a disappointment, as I had felt the Chinese would have appreciated these red flowering trees, plus the plaques were nowhere to be seen.

While still coming to grips with the situation, and to my relief, a team of gardeners arrived on site with all their gear and the maintenance issues were quickly being addressed. Shortly after this the plaques for the garden arrived in a wooden box and in no time were attached to the rocks at either end of the garden. One plaque explained the sister city relationship in both English and Chinese and the other explains the meaning of the Maori carving on the rock at the other end of the garden.



The official opening was planned for 10.30 am on the following Tuesday 19th August and was to be attended by the Mayor of Kunming and other high ranking city officials plus the New Zealand Ambassador to China, Mr Carl Worker, who had flown down from Beijing the night before.

The official party from New Plymouth had also arrived in the city on Monday and included the Mayor, Mr Andrew Judd, Deputy Mayor, Heather Dodunski, Iwi Relations Officer and Julie Straka, Councils Democratic Services Manager. Also attending the opening were

several New Zealand people who were currently living in Kunming or were involved in business there.

The opening had been very well planned and in addition to the speeches Trenton, the Councils Iwi Relations Officer blessed the carved rock and together we sang a waiata before the official party moved on to watch as the two Mayors planted a tree native to the Yunnan Province, in the garden to symbolise long lasting friendship.

The official opening was covered by the local Press and Television Team.

Comments from the New Zealanders who attended the function were that they felt the garden was a good representation of a New Zealand garden and had a good feel to it. The official opening was followed by a guided tour of the Golden Temple and then a lunch at a nearby Hotel.



Photos Chris Connolly

Serpents in Eden? – The Saga of the Shed Skins

Ron Lambert

In February 1974 Brian Moss and Michael Saunders found a cast snake skin near a path in Pukekura Park. Their find was reported in the *Daily News* under the sensational headline **Snakes Alive! In Park?** (TDN 18 Feb 1974) The skin was then sent to the National Museum in Wellington for identification.

As snake experts are a bit of a rarity in New Zealand, the find was eventually identified by the Australian Museum as that from a red-bellied black snake (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*) – a venomous (but relatively harmless) species. The identification did result in New Plymouth's Base Hospital immediately flying in enough snake-bite serum from across the Tasman to treat four possible victims. (TDN 1 April 1974)

But Brian and Michael's find was not the first discovery of a snake skin in the park! Between Christmas and New Year 1971-2, Kathleen Ward of Fillis Street was walking her dog in the park when it uncovered a skin near the Gilbert Street entrance. She thought it was from an eel and it was several months later, after friends suggested it was a shed snake skin, that she reported the find to the *Taranaki Herald*. (TH 2 June 1972)

The event caused few ripples at the time as the discovery was considered to be either a hoax or an accidental loss. In August, however, Mrs Ward received a letter from Turramurra, Sydney in which the writer, "P. L.", 'confessed' to bringing "... several young black snakes over in my luggage" in 1967 so his/her grandchildren could see them. "However their mother would not allow them to keep the snakes (there were four left) so I released them in that park ... maybe they survived. I didn't think they would, with your cold New Zealand winters ..." (Letter, August 7 [1972] ARC2005-198)

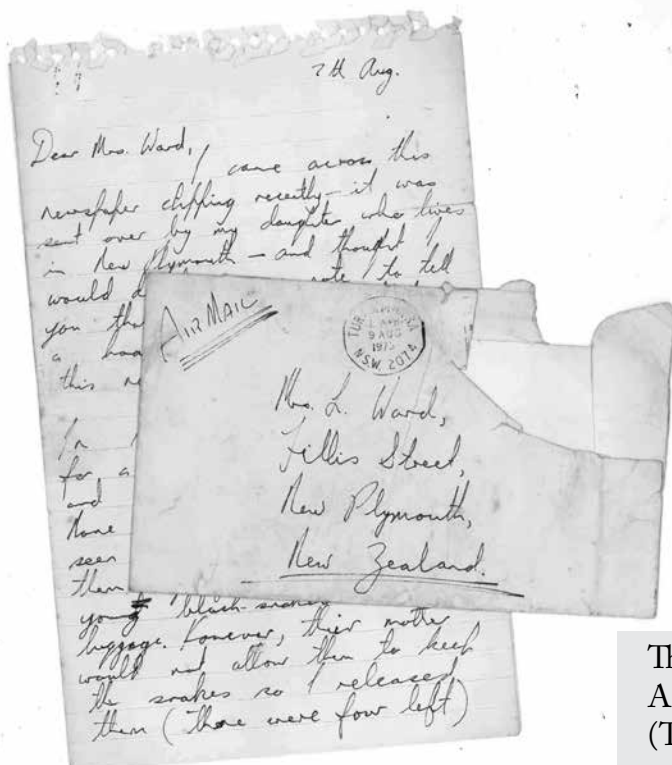
Jack Goodwin, the Parks Superintendent and an un-named Department of Agriculture official were both convinced the letter was bogus and considered the likelihood of live snakes being introduced in airline luggage was remote in the extreme. (Undated news clipping [1972], ARC2005-198)

The reaction of the authorities to the Moss and Saunders' find two years later was a little more marked, especially after the species was identified as poisonous. The Minister of Agriculture, Colin Moyle re-assured the New Plymouth public that his department would do all it could to find the snake, if one existed. (TDN 30 March 1974) *The Daily News* also investigated the incident and reported that it was "...99.9 per cent sure that the snake skin was dropped in the park last month by a young man who had recently been in Australia." (TDN 30 March 1974) As well as the stocking of anti-venom at the hospital, Ralph Adams, Deputy-Controller of the Wildlife Division – now DOC – made a rapid trip to New Plymouth to investigate the find and to search the park if necessary.

His following press release – co-incidentally made on April Fool's Day! – scotched the idea of serpents of any variety in the park. Interviews held with residents confirmed that the skins had been "placed around the Fountain Lake by a [un-named] young man." The "... practical joker, who was now living in Australia..." was also the writer of the letter to Kathleen Ward. (TDN 1 April 1974) The Police and Wildlife Department were not "taking further action," he confirmed. As the result of his inquiries the previous day, however, Adams was given a third snake skin which was also to be dropped in the park.

And so the saga of the Serpents in Eden came to a somewhat ignominious end.

Both snake skins (A96.612 & A70.678) and P.L.'s letter (ARC2005-198) are held by Puke Ariki



The Letter From "P.L." to Kathleen Ward
ARC2005-198, Puke Ariki Collection
(The stamps were removed by Police in an attempt to identify the sender.)

Beautiful Bark

Elise Smith

Mulberries, Figs, Breadfruit The names conjure up images of delicious fruits; juicy black mulberries, syrupy figs, and baked-potato breadfruit. The fruits are so different looking, it seems surprising that they are quite closely related, in the Family Moraceae. Appearances are deceptive, as close inspection shows all Moraceae have clusters of many tiny fruits (compound fruits), and all have milky sap in the soft stems and leaves.



Streblus smithii

The New Zealand representatives in the Moraceae Family are the Milk Trees, *Streblus*, which have long mulberry-like fruits and smooth grey branches. If wounded, latex exudes, hence their name. The Park has all three New Zealand species. A Small-Leaved Milkwood *Streblus heterophylla* is found on Claffey Walk, planted in July 1956. A Large-Leaved Milkwood *Streblus banksii* in the 'Fillis Street native botanical reserve', behind the cricket practice nets, was planted in 1956. It has pale bark and inconspicuous tufts of flower spikes, with oddly small leaves, unlike the young one set in a planting of Three Kings Milkwood *Streblus smithii* to the north of the Fernery. The Three Kings Milkwood is found naturally only on



Streblus banksii

the Three Kings Islands, where it is common. It was named for Stephenson Percy Smith who was a member of the Recreation Grounds (later Pukekura Park) Board. There are several groups of these shrubs; the ones on Racecourse Walk planted in 1992, some to the north of the Fernery, and a larger one in Kunming Garden. Peering deep under the canopy of this male plant, you will see the coco-pop bark texture, and the spikes of old flowers arising directly from the stem.



Ficus macrophylla

There are three other Moraceae family members in the Park. The most dramatic is the Australian giant Moreton Bay Fig, *Ficus macrophylla*, near the Hatchery Lawn. Planted in May 1895, it is on the national register of NZ Notable Trees.

At the Zoo you will see the large White Mulberry *Morus alba*, planted in 1967, originating from northern China, and traditionally grown to feed silkworms. The local tree is bare of leaves in winter, as they are deciduous in temperate climates.



Ficus sp.

On the Racecourse Walk is an intriguing Fig tree *Ficus sp.*, festooned with fruit on the trunk and branches. The species is still unidentified, but it is thought to have come from New Guinea, brought back by Felix Jury, and planted in the 1970s.



Morus alba

Photos Elise Smith

People of the Park

Adrienne Tatham

The team of gardeners who “polish the jewels in the crown” and keep our Park in such perfect condition enjoy working in this outdoor environment. Rose Hogwood is one of these, and is responsible for the maintenance of Brooklands Park, Rhododendron Dell and Goodwin Dell.

Born in Kaponga, Rose spent her early childhood years there and at Manaia on small farms stocked with cows, calves and sheep as well as growing asparagus, which each season, she picked before school. The family moved to the Bell Block area so she was able to attend New Plymouth Girls’ High School, but still she picked asparagus. Her schooling completed, she moved on to study at Massey University where she graduated with a double degree in Horticulture and Landscape Gardening, spending her summer breaks doing practical experience, first at Pratt’s Nursery at Waitara and then at Palmers Gardenworld in Palmerston North where she later became a fulltime employee. After this she moved to Hawkes Bay where she worked in a tissue culture laboratory. Then followed a stint at Oderings perennial nursery in Havelock North; and later work with Oderings Garden Centre.

Following this, Rose set off on a three year OE where in England she was involved with asparagus and strawberries, pesticide testing, quality control and weight testing at Tuddenham near Ipswich. Here she also found out about plant allergies.

A change of occupation ensued, and for a while she was employed as a waitress in a 5-star hotel, where she lived on site. Rose then took up a job at Ashford, which had a park in need of renovation, She tidied up, sourced plants and found labour for its ongoing care. Then came the snow.

On her subsequent return home, Rose was employed by New Plymouth District Council as coordinator of bedding plants in the cemeteries, before being posted to Pukekura Park. She spends her spare time helping students at Scotlands Hostel with their homework, as well as reading, skiing and tramping. However, having now bought a house she finds her time occupied with repairs and renovations.



Left. Adrienne Tatham (left) of the Friends with Rose, planting *Quercus robur* next to the Brooklands road.

Below. Wheelbarrow delivery for the volunteers. Someone has to keep them going!



Photos Derek Hughes

Eclectus Parrots

**Kelly Diana Rees
Keeper**

Brooklands Zoo is pleased to welcome the newest additions to our family- *Eclectus roratus*. Most commonly known as the *Eclectus* Parrot, this species is native to parts of Australia, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. Males are commonly bright green with red and blue under the wings, and have a large yellow-orange beak. Females are drastically different and have black beaks with a combination of purple and red feathers. A yellow-tipped tail can also be found on males and females of specific subspecies.

Eclectus are commonly kept in captivity as pets due to their quiet nature, and excellent ability to mimic sounds and words. Females are generally more sought-after due to their brilliant plumage, but many consider males to be docile and easier to tame. Regardless, our two males are not companion birds, and keepers are strictly 'hands off'. This allows our visitors to view them from a safe distance, and the birds are free to exhibit their natural behaviour. Our *Eclectus* are housed in a large, walk-through aviary with a collection of other parrot species. They have the ability to fly, socialise, and explore within the safety of their habitat.



Brooklands Zoo bird keepers offer them a varied diet of seed and nectar, combined with fresh fruit and vegetables. *Eclectus* are generally very interested in fruit like grapes and papaya, and love an assortment of different nuts. They receive a special 'extra' food on top of their regular daily diet, which include things like millet spray and crushed boiled eggs. Cuttlebone is also offered once a week to provide them with added calcium which aids in wearing down their growing beaks. Providing them with such a diverse diet that covers all of their nutritional needs gives them the best chance at a healthy life.

Since the *Eclectus* Parrot is such an intelligent species, our keepers must get creative with their everyday enrichment. Our duo will easily tear through paper bags and rip open empty muesli boxes to find their favourite treats hidden inside. Hanging trays with assorted foods provide them with a swinging challenge, and covered banana boxes with scented grass and hay are also a fun chewing activity! Our birds are never bored as there is always something to explore or rip apart!

In the wild, *Eclectus* are often found very high in the trees and rarely come down to the ground. Ours are true to this, and are often found on the highest ropes. We are proud to house such a special species alongside our other fascinating birds. They have spent a number of weeks in quarantine preparing for their transition into Brooklands Zoo's free-flight aviary and have adjusted with absolutely no issues! If you cannot find them on your next visit, listen closely as they love to say, "Helloooo!".