

The Magazine of the Friends of Pukekura Park

Volume 13, Number 2
June 2018



Early hint of Spring in the
Friends' maintained gardens at the Gables.

Photo Derek Hughes

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

www.pukekura.org.nz

<http://kete.pukekura.org.nz>

Hunting Myrtle Rust

Mandy Tatham

Greetings from the Aliens!

We are chasing golden fairy dust through the land.

Another week has just started. It's 6 in the morning and we're waiting for the shuttle to collect us. It's dark now in the mornings and none of us have quite done what we'd planned in the weekend. Others are at an airport anywhere around the country. We gather, bleary-eyed, after an all-too-short weekend at home. Some of us clutch coffee, most have headphones. We're ready to go and face another week chasing rust or mapping Myrtles. We get to a new destination, feeling like the old song: "I've been everywhere, man, I've been Explorair, man". We check in at the motel, gather our scattered wits, check the gear, and hit the road. And we're off!

Nobody is familiar with this place. We need a map. But this is modern times and the younger ones grab their cells and google map us around. Others put on the navigator in the car. Old fogies like me use maps... And team leader rings base to find out just which area to target. The phone is busy, everyone is ringing at once.

Hurray! We don't need overalls! No sweat rolling down our backs while we peer myopically at tiny leaves and shoots. No comments from our audience asking if we are aliens going back to the mother-ship; no crack house or meth lab found on this street; no dead bodies in sight. No "Hold it RIGHT THERE, I'm getting my camera, smile please! Otherwise nobody would believe me". And no more Teletubbies either.

But we are in the hi-viz vests with our name tags on display, so we MUST be important, right? So it's a gas leak, we're cutting the trees down, looking for moths, Mycoplasma bovis, kauri dieback, or some other pest like those fruit flies, maybe?

So you get those lovely neighbours who look after absolutely everybody poking their heads out like jack-in-the-boxes asking in a very interrogative tone "Can I help you with anything???", "What are you fullas looking for?", "Who are you?" Or best of all, the little old men asking "Is your name Myrtle? Hehehehe"

Or you get the owners in all states in an absolute tizzy not knowing who is knocking on their door. We've had everyone from lawyers to ex nursery owners to children to very large dogs to little old ladies and everything in between. Our spiel: "We're looking for myrtle rust. We are a surveillance team. We are surveying myrtles to get an idea of what is around so we know where to come later".

And boy do we get some interesting reactions "What's that, can my peaches/roses/apples/cannas/spuds/garlic get it? Where did it come from? How did it get here? We've had it for YEARS, about time you did something about it. Can you look at my plants PLEASE? What's this plant, can it get rust? Really, are you sure? Send it back where it came from! Cut all those plants down, especially that one/that hedge that spoils my view. Get rid of it quick!"

We explain that at this point we're just mapping plants. We can't go pulling out perfectly healthy plants, sorry. It's not in the area yet. But we're putting dots on the map just in case. So we know where to come next time. And they happily clutch their colour sheet with the pretty picture of gold dust on a pohutukawa shoot. And we're happy knowing we have another convert who will look out for rust and will ring the 0800 number - it's now on speed dial - the minute they find something exciting. Probably on a *Banksia* or a *Rhaphiolepis* or something.

Or the other extreme: "I don't want to be singled out, I'd like you to leave now."

We've had people pick our brains on all sorts of subjects, and thankfully the crews are a fairly mixed bag so we can cover just about any subject. We've given garden advice, and named every tree in a garden on occasion. We've admired all sorts of vehicles. We've been offered water, tea, coffee, strawberries, lemons (gin to go with it!), lunch, and beer... We've also been offered a few yeehahs by hoons hanging out of cars, "cher, bro". The kids are very serious.

Contributions should be sent to

Friends of Pukekura Park, P.O. Box 484, New Plymouth 4340.

Magazine content editor: Adrienne Tatham. Photographic editor & designer: Derek Hughes

email: project@pukekura.org.nz web: www.pukekura.org.nz facebook: [pukekura-park-friends](https://www.facebook.com/pukekura-park-friends)

Dogs are intrigued. They can't smell us well in the overalls so they don't quite know how to deal with us. Most of them bark at the strangers. Good dogs doing their job. Others are just dying to say hello and get a pat. A few are proper guard dogs and won't let us in at all. Cats, well, they're cats.

And here we go again. And the app doesn't work. It's down. Restart. Reload. Try again. We're lost without the darned thing. We get the thing working again. Take a break to go to the loo/ before we get heat stroke / frozen / wet through/blown away, or have lunch. Where do we have lunch today? Find a sheltered spot. We've all been out in the elements. Time to have five minutes' peace. Find a beach if there is one. No sights to see, no time unless they've got *Lophomyrtus*. Stir each other up about the day so far, to keep spirits up.

And then start looking again. Map all myrtles, especially *Lophomyrtus*. Scum of the earth, *Lophomyrtus*. Our indicator species. We've all got a radar that tunes in on them. They get priority for mapping over any other species. *Lophomyrtus* first, rest after. Unless you find an interesting oddity like *Melaleuca*, *Hypocalymma*, *Tristaniopsis*, etc.

At the end of the day a sigh of relief from a cross-eyed crew. Either you're staring at dots on plants or staring at the screen on the cell phone. Headaches all round. Relax before tea. One more effort at being nice to the team you're with all week. Dinner takes forever to arrive. Sods Law: The more tired you are, the longer it takes to be served your dinner. An hour and a half later we stumble off to our rooms, overfed and tired. Ring home to keep in touch. Miss your other half, family, and pets.

At last it's Friday! Fly day. Get through work knowing you're on the way home, a rush job to finish up nicely and make sure you've got good coverage of an area. Pack up and don't leave anything behind in the motel. And cross fingers that the flights are on time.

Uh-oh, get to the airport and find the vital home leg is delayed. Do a few laps over the sea to wait for planes to go or weather to subside. Or worse: it's cancelled. Ring base and get a rental car to come home in. Get home at midnight. Or tomorrow if you stay where you're stranded. Collapse at home - or try to. Too much to do...too little time....



Photo by Pip Guthrie

Sterile Agapanthus Trial

Chris Connolly

Auckland Botanic Gardens have been working with a Collective of several other organisations and individuals to find 'sterile' varieties of *Agapanthus*. The Collective wants to identify and then breed sterile forms of *Agapanthus* with the aim of ensuring New Zealand gardeners still have an *Agapanthus* choice for their gardens in the face of the fact that *Agapanthus*, due to its prolific seeding and invasive nature is now banned from sale in Auckland. There is a concern that in time this ban may be extended to other parts of the country.

The Collective has selected ten forms of *Agapanthus* which seem to produce only small amounts of viable seed. A limit of no more than 2% viable seed production has been set as the target. This is a significant reduction as some *Agapanthus* in the wild can produce as many as 20,000 viable seeds in a season.

Their next step is to test these ten varieties of *Agapanthus* in a range of different climatic locations around New Zealand. Pukekura Park is one of these sites. The trial plots will be set out on the grassed area on the western side of the Pukekura Park Tennis Club.

The plants will arrive in New Plymouth over the next few weeks and planting is planned for next month. There will be three plants of each of these 10 different varieties planted as per the trial specifications and records will be kept of their seed production.



Photo by Chris Connolly

People of the Park

Diane Smith

Diane stepped in to help the work in the Park when the hunt for Myrtle Rust meant that permanent staff were seconded to the hunt and there were few hands to keep the park in order. Hailing from Whanganui, Diane is a horse lover, working with thoroughbreds. She worked in the Matapero area, at the Okawa stud where she met her husband. Steeplechasing was a sport she trained horses for.

Her family consists of two grown boys. Diane comes from a family who love gardening, so the love of plants is inherited. She has worked for Tui Landscaping and has also spent time mowing lawns about New Plymouth for the District Council. She comments on just how many pieces of lawns there are around the town in out of the way places.

She is helping the gardeners in the park for three months.

Adrienne Tatham



Photo by Adrienne Tatham

Pukekura Park's Charlie

Tom and Molly Nagle

When Pukekura Park worker and Caged Bird Judge, Mr Les Selby informed the Pukekura Park Kiosk operators of an Australian Yellow Crested Cockatoo for sale in Rotorua a trip was taken to view the bird. The year was about 1984. Charlie, the bird, was housed in a farm implement shed in a very small rusty cage. His feathers were rusty as they touched the cage at every turn. He appeared very quiet and healthy and he had bright eyes. Estimated age at the time was 2 years.



For the princely sum of \$1,000.00 Charlie's ownership changed hands and he was placed in the back of a van for the trip to NP. Travelling through the Awakino Gorge all peace was suddenly shattered by loud screeches, laughs, dog barks, horse neighs, wolf whistles and sounds like people arguing. Charlie had realized that he was *'out of that shed'*.

When Charlie was first introduced to Pukekura Park Kiosk surroundings he let out almighty screeches. He was enjoying the open spaces and letting the other birdlife know he had arrived. On that first day the curator at that time, Mr George Fuller heard Charlie's call from the middle of the cricket pitch and came to see what had arrived in the park.

Charlie had a bigger stainless steel cage on wheels built for him and after a settling in period he came to love his visitors. If nobody was around he would call loudly until somebody came to entertain him. He loved company and his admirers bought him presents. One gentleman always a bunch of freshly picked grass seed heads. Anything he did not like was pushed out of his cage or demolished.

Sometimes Charlie would play hard to get and would not acknowledge his visitor. When the visitor turned away disappointed he would call out "Goodbye Charlie" and of course they would come back to him. Imagine their surprise when their own name was Charlie. Yes, he was cheeky.

Charlie trained so many visitors to dance. He loved to bob up and down on his perch and soon his visitors were bobbing too. Charlie liked at times to have his head and feathers stroked and would pop his head out of his cage opening to encourage visitors to stroke him. However, he sometimes nipped the hand that stroked him and over the years would have had a lot of notches in his perch.

In the early days Charles would travel home each night in a van. One night this cheeky bird was placed too close to the laundry basket and during the trip had great fun pulling each tea towel into his cage. On another occasion he demolished the van's upholstered back door panel. He knew he was being a little devil. Over the years that Charlie was at the Kiosk attitudes towards caged birds changed. Eventually it was felt that perhaps he would be happier, have more room and a safe place to live at the Brooklands Zoo, a place where he could also still have his visitors, so this was arranged.

Charlie was not put into exile for bad behaviour but to give him a better environment. After Charlie was transferred to the Zoo many of his fans would ask at the Kiosk - "Where is Charlie?" He certainly was not forgotten. He was much loved. Many people went to the Zoo just to revisit Charlie.

The Yellow Camellia

Val Smith



“What?” you will ask. “A yellow camellia?” But those who have been on the Friends’ guided walks in Pukekura Park will know where (and when) to look for this most unusual colour in the Camellia genus of mainly red, pink and white flowers. For it does not stand out blatantly as if to say, “Here I am,” but hides shyly under the foliage waiting to be discovered.

Camellia nitidissima grows naturally in a small area of forest in southern Guangxi in China and in northern Vietnam. It is an evergreen shrub or small tree up to 5 metres tall. The leathery, elongated, oval leaves are glossy emerald green and have dimpled veins across the surface. New bronze foliage unfolds in both spring and autumn, and flowering occurs from midwinter to midspring. The cup-shaped, waxy blooms are semi-double, light to canary yellow, with the petals curving inward like those of a rose. In the center of each blossom is a dense cluster of golden-orange stamens.

Taxonomic confusion between *Camellia nitidissima* and *Camellia chrysantha* sometimes has taxonomists splitting the two species or putting the latter as a synonym of the former. Although first described (by C W Chi) in 1948, *Camellia*

nitidissima didn’t become widely available to western gardeners and horticulturalists until it was rediscovered in Yongning County in the 1960s. Other species of yellow flowered Camellias have since been described from China and more recently Vietnam, but *C. nitidissima* remains the main species on the international horticultural market. The golden camellia is called “cattle urine grass” in Guangxi, for its extraordinary curative powers on diseased cattle, and it is also used widely to make health teas and beverages for the Southeast Asian market. Although manufacturing companies claim that cultivated plants are used, wild camellias are known to be targeted for their flowers. Survival of the species is also threatened by habitat loss and the collection of seedlings, and efforts are being made to restore and establish habitat.

Of the bright yellow-flowered species, *Camellia nitidissima* (syn. *C. chrysantha*) is one of only two that gardeners are likely to see in New Zealand and then only in the warmest parts of the country. Seek it out in the vicinity of the Racecourse Walk! (The other species, *Camellia impressinervis*, has softer yellow flowers.)

Main reference: *Camellia nitidissima*: <http://globaltrees.org/> (accessed 5 June 2018).



Photos by Val Smith

Winter update

Sheryl Clyma
Field Work Coordinator

Autumn/ Early Winter has been a challenge for the Parks team. Mother Nature has wreaked havoc and sent many storms our way. This results in staff's time being allocated to clearing up debris instead of general garden maintenance.

The park has lost numerous trees in these storms the most significant being the *Abies religiosa* and *Magnolia campbellii* 'Alba' near the Racecourse/Stadium track. The Magnolia was the only one of its kind in the park so we will look to replace this. The wall was also damaged and will be repaired.

The Pukekura Senior Field Staff team member and I had planned changes up at Victoria Road carpark and border. Some of this work has been completed already and some is still in progress. Due to unsavoury behaviours by ratbags in the Victoria Road car park which was noticed by neighbours we have cleared out the undergrowth from under the pohutukawa and replanted with lower growing Hebes. This has opened up the car park. In some areas the border has been removed and replaced with bollards and grass which provides a view shaft into the Arboretum and the grass area behind. The rest of the border will be reduced in size from the inside edge and grassed, the front of the border will be re planted with Hebes, Corokias and Olearias.

The Shortland Street Entrance will soon be planted with exotic shrubs to provide a welcoming entrance.

Rogan Street car park has been refreshed, the large overgrown *Lomandra* 'Tanika' have been removed and these islands have been replaced with a smaller growing *Lomandra* called 'Little Pal'. The bush boundary behind the islands has had more Camellias planted and groups of *Hydrangea* for summer colour.

At the Brooklands end of the park we have had a temporary staffing change, Rose is working in the Parks office for seven months and Beau has stepped up into her role as Brooklands Senior Field staff. Currently the herbaceous border is undergoing some changes. We are reducing the width of the border by planting small trees/shrubs along the back of the border. We will be planting Camellias, Kalmias and Lagerstroemias. The majority of the public walk up the sealed road up the middle of the park so hopefully these plantings will provide seasonal colour for them to enjoy from a distance. This will also reduce the area that needs to be maintained by the staff.



Looking towards the Shortland Street entrance showing new plantings.

Photo by Derek Hughes

Six of the best: kauri of note

Ian Hutchinson
Botanical Records Officer

Kauri, *Agathis australis*, is native to New Zealand and grows naturally in the lowland forests of the north of the North Island. Kauri have been planted in Pukekura Park over the years in significant numbers (approximately 265, plus or minus a few). However there are six that I wish to tell you about because they are either significant from an historical point of view or because, in the case of one of them, there's a quirky story attached.

The first kauri to be planted in the park is situated at the foot of Monument Hillside on the path to the Rhododendron Dell and is easy to identify as a boardwalk has been installed to protect the roots. In a 1973 report by S. W. Burstall, *Historic and Notable trees of New Zealand: Taranaki Wanganui and Rangatikei – Central North Island*, he quotes from a letter sent to the Parks and Reserves Department by W. W. Smith, past curator of the park, dated the 4 May 1936: "The young tree when seven years old, was presented to the Park by the late Captain Waller in 1909. It grew for two years in the lawn where the larger puriris are now growing. In March 1911 it was planted where it now grows. I attribute its rapid and vigorous growth to its being planted in the rich black soil with which the walk was made. The soil was thrown out from the bottom of the extension of the lake above the upper bridge, by a gang of Maoris who completed the work. The tree is growing in a warm sheltered valley, which also greatly favours its growth". The puriri mentioned are those that used to grow next to the teahouse but have since been removed. The lawn referred to occupied the space/footprint of the current teahouse. It was created in 1899 and was known as the Picnic Lawn. When measured in 2002 by Cory Smith and George Fuller, the kauri was 24.3m tall and had a spread of 13.3m.

So who was Captain Waller? William Waller was the second son of Charles and Emma Waller and grew up on the family farm at Lepperton with his brother and sister. Captain William Waller captained ships for the Union Steamship Company, his first command being the s.s. *Oreti* and afterwards the *Brunner*, *Flora* and *Rosamund*. He was chief officer of the s.s. *Harwea* when it unfortunately foundered off the New Plymouth harbour. After the Union Company he worked for Australian-owned Huddart-Parker Company Ltd and captained or was chief officer of the ships s.s. *Anglian*, s.s. *Victoria*, s.s. *Westralia* and – his last command – the s.s. *Wimmera*. He resigned his position with Huddart-Parker Company Ltd in February 1913 to take up the role of Harbour Master for New Plymouth. He commenced duties in March 1913 and continued in the role until his death on 5 September 1930.

The kauri on the Fred Parker Lawn was planted on 17 October 1929 by Mayor H. V. S Griffiths to commemorate the handing over of the park from the autonomous Pukekura Park Board to the New Plymouth Borough Council. "An interesting ceremony was held at Pukekura Park on Thursday, when the Park Board formally handed over control of the Park to the New Plymouth Borough Council. The board, which has controlled the reserve since 1876, has found the financial claims too heavy recently, and Thursday's ceremony was the result of long negotiations. The board members will retain an interest in the park as members of a special committee that has been set up by the Borough Council. The ceremony included an inspection of the historic trees planted when the park was opened on the 29th May, 1876. An address appropriate to the occasion was delivered by Mr R. C. Hughes, a member of the present board, who holds the remarkable record of 54 years' service on the board, and who was chiefly responsible for establishing the park. He formally handed over the deeds by which the park is now vested in the Borough to the Mayor H. V. S. Griffiths. The ceremony was completed by the planting of a kauri tree by the Mayor near the fernery". (Evening Post, 21 October 1929) When measured in 2001 it was 23.5m tall and had a spread of 9.1m.

To the north of the old curator's house on Victoria Road there are three kauri trees, one of which was planted there by the local Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in 1931 to commemorate the visit to New Zealand of Lord Baden Powell, the founder of the Scouting movement. In 1984 the tree was measured and was recorded as being 17m tall and having a trunk diameter of 0.4m. To try and work out exactly which tree it is, I have used an old aerial photograph that has a grid overlay and have matched the grid number C12 visually with another in row 12 near the Bellringer Pavilion, namely the tulip tree at the rear of the pavilion. I have also compared a current aerial photograph on site to check the visual siting just to confirm. Based on that, I have concluded that the Scouts/Guides kauri is the southern-most of the three next to the intersection of the paths in that area and directly opposite, to the south, is a redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*.

In late February into early March 1931, Lord Baden Powell visited New Zealand with his wife Lady Baden

Powell, to meet with members of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in New Zealand. They arrived in Auckland and attended a pageant of Scouts and Guides at the Auckland Domain on Saturday 21 February. They left Auckland and travelled to Rotorua where they spent a few days before travelling to Wellington where they attended a pageant, similar to the one in Auckland, at the Basin Reserve on 28 February. Following their time in Wellington they travelled to Christchurch, arriving on 4 March, where they attended a Civic Reception. After some time in the South Island they returned to Wellington before departing for Australia on 13 March 1931, where they met with Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. Following their visit to Australia, they returned to England via South Africa where they also met with Scouts and Guides.

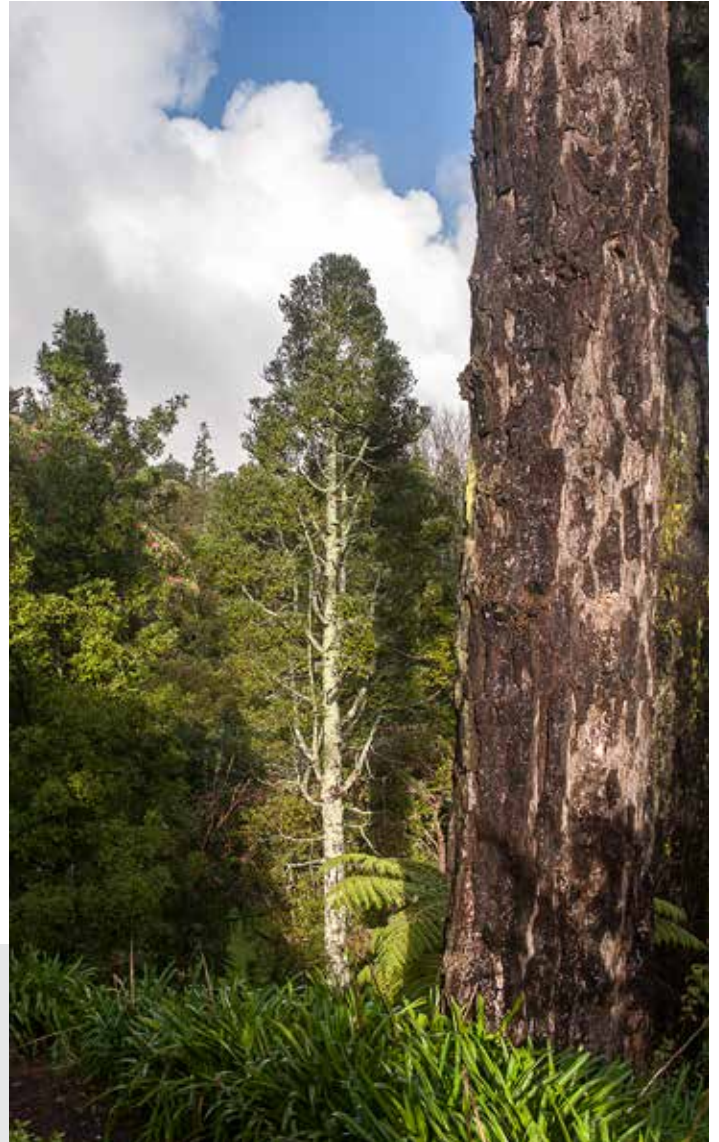
The Hughes kauri is located on the lower western flank of Cannon Hill, near the Hatchery Lawn. It was planted here on 6 April 1934 by Mr R. C. Hughes to commemorate his years of service to the park on the committee that had overseen the park's development and management. "Within the shadow of a giant *Pinus radiata*, towering more than 120ft, which he planted 58 years ago, Mr R. C. Hughes today planted a kauri tree in Pukekura Park. It was an occasion probably unique in New Zealand. At the age of 85 years Mr Hughes has not only seen the park develop from its more primitive state to its present-day excellence, but has also taken a continuously active part in its control. As a member of the Taranaki Provincial Council it was he who in 1875 moved that sections should be set aside for botanical gardens. He was a foundation member of the Park Board and has sat on it since then." (Auckland Star 6 April 1934)

Robert Clinton Hughes, the founder of the park, lived a long and productive life, dying on 18 January 1935. The pine tree he planted on the opening day of the park on 29 May 1876 was removed in December 2016 due to the deterioration in the condition of the tree. However, the kauri lives on and will probably go from strength to strength without the competition of its previous neighbour. It is a fitting living memorial to Mr R. C. Hughes. The Hughes Walk was the first pathway to be created in Pukekura Park and is named in honour of Mr Hughes, starting at the original entrance to the park near the lower part of Victoria Road.

The Bicycle Kauri was planted on 6 October 1949 by Mr J. W. Goodwin, curator of Pukekura Park, and is located near the bridge over the waterwheel, in the children's playground. The kauri tree had been originally given to Mr Norton, who lived at 89 Brougham Street, in 1943 by the park or Parks Department. He duly planted the tree and then some years later realised that it was going to end up being too big and was misplaced where he had planted it. So in 1949, some six years later, he offered it back to the park and then Curator J. W. Goodwin. The method of transplanting was somewhat unusual, given the size to which it had grown and the absence of a vehicle to transport it. The kauri on Mr Norton's property had grown to a height of around eight feet (2.44m) and Mr Goodwin's solution for recovering and transporting the kauri back to the park was to detail Lou Schonbachler, a staff member at the park, to accompany him on bicycle to the site and uplift the tree. The kauri was dug up and, as often happens with young kauri trees, apparently the soil fell off the roots. However the roots were covered up and the tree was lashed between the two bicycles. George Fuller made the following comment in Cory Smith's *The Notable Trees of New Plymouth* (2002): "The slow procession of two men, two cycles, two spades and one kauri ricker wending its way through the town with Pukekura Park as the destination must have indeed been a strange spectacle." On arrival at the park, the tree was replanted in its current location and under Mr Goodwin's expert care it managed to survive this somewhat strange ordeal. Some 69 years later it continues to be the healthy well-shaped tree you see today. When last measured in 2001, it was 17.7m tall.

The Centennial Kauri was planted on Cannon Hill on 1 May 1976 by Mr D. F. C. Saxton and A Brodie, as part of the park centennial year commemorations and celebrations. The tree is located on the western side of Cannon Hill just below the summit. Mr Donald F. C. Saxton served as chairman of the Pukekura Park Committee for a period of 20 years, from 1948 to 1968. Saxton Walk is named in his honour. Mr Alex Brodie was a fellow member of the Pukekura Park Committee and a local Civil Engineer. When measured in 2001, this tree was 6.7m tall, a relatively small size given its age at the time of being measured, which can probably be attributed to soil conditions that are not particularly good and the probable competition from the nearby pine trees and the surrounding agapanthus. While it is currently still a fairly small tree considering the 42 years that have elapsed since being planted, this in no way diminishes this tree's significance.

References: S. W. Burstall; Historic and Notable trees of New Zealand: Taranaki Wanganui and Rangatikei - Central North Island
Cory Smith; The Notable Trees of New Plymouth, 2002
Scot Medbury; I.D.S. (1984 and 86) recording report for NPDC Parks & Recreation Department
Papers Past, National Library of New Zealand
WikiTree



Right: The Hughes kauri on the side of Cannon Hill

Below: Looking up the first kauri planted at the base of Monument Hill



Photos by Derek Hughes

Palm Lawn: past and present

Ian Hutchinson
Botanical Records Officer

The Palm Lawn, which is located to the north of the Fountain Lake, like many other areas of the park has an interesting history, having at one time been the site of a rose garden. In the 17 July 1911 edition of the Taranaki Daily News, page four, it was reported that: "A rose garden is to be made in the Recreation Grounds, Mr C. E. Bellringer having donated a fine collection of trees. The rose garden will be placed near the Gilbert Street entrance." The following year In the Daily News on 11 September 1912, page eight, it was reported that the curator, W. W. Smith, had reported to the Pukekura Park Board: "The rose bed is now fully planted and the terrace around it has been sown in lawn grass, which is germinating perfectly." The roses for the garden came from the Morshead Nursery Company and two private donors.

The collection of roses was bolstered further in 1915 with a donation from Duncan & Davies. Duncan & Davies also donated other trees and shrubs at the same time, which probably included the Judas tree, *Cercis siliquastrum*, which is a standout feature specimen and the parapara or bird catcher tree, *Pisonia brunoniana*, that also used to grow at Palm Lawn. Some of you may remember it. The parapara was a tree of public interest and at times concern up until its death and subsequent removal in February 1997. It caused a lot of animosity during the 1930s with the public because of the sticky seed pods on which birds sometimes became stuck and in some cases, perished. An anonymous citizen, who was a bird lover, took on the task of removing the flowers/seed pods annually for many years and this community service even resulted in a mention in the New Zealand Herald on 6 July 1943, along with the fact they hadn't carried out the task this year as usual. Scot Medbury in his 1986 measurement report of notable trees in the park, which was commissioned by the Parks and Recreation Department, wrote the following in relation to the parapara: "Following the death of the bird lover park staff assumed responsibility for flower removal."

The next development occurred in 1917 and resulted in the current naming of this area Palm Lawn. In the Taranaki Daily News on 17 September 1917, page six, there is a report of a meeting of the Pukekura Park Board. At that meeting, "The Curator (Mr. W. W. Smith) was instructed by the board to select for purchase a number of palms from a list supplied by Mr. Clement Wragge, of Auckland." The 7 November 1917 issue of the Taranaki Daily News, page four, in a report of the most recent monthly meeting of the Pukekura Park Board, shows that the Curator in his report stated: "During the month a large packet of seeds was received from an unknown donor. The plants ordered from Mr. Wragge, of Auckland, came to hand on October 27 and were planted out in the beds near the lower lake." The palm plants received included kentia palm, *Howea forsteriana*, Australian fan palm or cabbage palm, *Livistona australis* and cliff date palm *Phoenix rupicola*.

So who was Clement Wragge? Clement Lindley Wragge was born in England on 18 September 1852, and is best known for his profession as a meteorologist and his contributions in that field. The first time Wragge left England, he travelled to Adelaide in South Australia, briefly working as a surveyor. He returned to England where he set up a weather observatory on Ben Nevis. Some years later he returned to Adelaide, setting up two weather observatories and becoming the founding member of the Royal Meteorological Society of Australia. From Adelaide he moved to Queensland to become the first Director of the Weather Bureau in Brisbane, and held this role from 1887 till 1903, when the Weather Bureau closed with the federation of states and the formation of a national weather service.

After leaving Brisbane and his beloved garden at Capemba he travelled extensively, visiting Ceylon, India and a number of South Pacific countries, ultimately settling in New Zealand, firstly in Dunedin and then in Auckland where he developed a property which he named Waiata Tropical Gardens. The garden was developed on land he bought in 1910 on the edge of the Waitamata Harbour at Birkenhead. Palms formed an integral part of the garden he created and once they were fully developed, he regularly opened the garden to visitors. It comes as no surprise to know that he also set up a weather observatory on the property and provided local reports for Auckland.

At the northern end of the Palm Lawn and adjacent to the stream is an example of the Belmore sentry palm, *Howea belmoreana*, which was planted here circa 1967. In August 1965 the park was gifted 'Section 1196 Town of New Plymouth' from the estate of Mr Harry Frethey, the site of the current Band Room and the original home

for this palm tree. In April 1967 when plans were drawn up for the Band Room and for the building project to occur, it was necessary to relocate the palm tree as well as a weeping elm to the north-western end of the Fountain Lake. These are both good examples of the successful transplanting of larger mature plants. The two *Howea* species represented at Palm Lawn can be told apart by the formation of the leaves. The leaflets of the *Howea belmoreana* rise in a V shape from the leaf stem, whereas in *Howea forsteriana* the leaflets grow horizontally from the leaf stem. In 2001 the palm collection was built on with the addition of a number new genera and species, which include bangalow palm, *Archontopenix cunninghamiana*, Mount Lewis palm, *Archontophoenix purpurea*, jelly palm, *Butia odorata*, Himalayan fishtail palm, *Caryota maxima* 'Himalaya', Chinese fishtail palm, *Caryota ochlandra*, Ecuadorian wax palm, *Ceroxylon ventricosum*, mountain coconut, *Parajubaea cocoides* and Bolivian mountain coconut, *Parajubaea torallyi*. One of the *Parajubaea cocoides* was planted by New Plymouth Mayor Claire Stewart on 29 May 2001, to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the park. Mayor Stewart used the same spade to plant the palm that was used by Miss Jane Carrington to plant the park's first trees on 29 May 1876.

In more recent times the Palm Lawn has been an area where vireya rhododendrons have been integrated into the landscape. The vireya rhododendrons planted include varieties such as Golden Charm, Pop Corn, Tropic Glow and Will Silent, while the varieties Red Mountain, Scented Sun and Tickety Boo have been added just this year.

References: Papers Past, National Library of New Zealand, Taranaki Daily News Magazine of the New Zealand Palm & Cycad Society Magazine September 1988; article "Clement Lindley Wragge and the Birkenhead Palms" by Peter Money
Wikipedia
Archaeopedia



Photo by Ian Hutchinson