

Pinus torreyana.

Members who have visited the Fountain Lake area recently could hardly fail to notice the expansive gap in the skyline created by the removal of a large pine which dominated above the Pavilion.

This was no ordinary pine but a magnificent specimen of *Pinus torreyana* or Torrey pine, native to a much drier coastal climate in southern California close to Mexico. The species is notable for shedding its large cones annually, unlike ^{P.} *radiata*. The seeds are so large that they were a ~~an~~ food source for local Indians.

~~The~~ The planting date is unrecorded but an early photograph taken presumably in the 1880s reveals it as a vigorous sapling so it would have been ^{but very slightly larger} over a hundred years old. Remarkably, it had an almost identical twin ~~with~~ beside the Playground until ~~at~~ 23/9/04 when it too was felled. Comparison of ^{dimensions of} the two trees, ~~is~~ this one growing close to a stream & protected from wind & the Playground tree much more exposed ^{& distant from water,} is quite uncanny.

Dimensions ~~of~~ Playground tree, August 2001. ~~Height 41.9m.~~

← Height 41.9 m. Diameter of canopy 29.5m. Diam of trunk 1.542m.

2/9/01. Pavilion " " 400 " " " 26.7 " " 1.52

In 1969, SW Burstall, an authority on trees ^{recorded} ~~recorded~~ the Playground tree as 'the largest & tallest recorded in N.Z.' & I suspect that the ^{same} distinction may extend beyond our shores.

So, why were two such ^{aged,} magnificent & notable trees felled within two years of each other.

During the summer of ¹⁹⁹³⁻⁹⁴ ~~1994~~ the Playground tree, illuminated by a very powerful floodlight ^{to its trunk} secured with two bolts was a feature of the summer ^{lighting} display. During an overnight storm the tree was hit by lightning. Next morning staff noticed that the electrical charge had travelled down one leader, ^{then} jumped a gap to continue ^{burning a trail} down the one immediately above the floodlight, where the burnt trail ^{it} ended.

→ reach the one ^{directly} ~~above~~ beneath which the floodlight was secured. The burnt ^{vertical} trail in the bark ended at the floodlight.

Incredulous electricians found that the cable supplying power to the light was unharmed but ~~over~~ the heavy copper coils within the unit were reduced to a molten mess. The coils seem to have dissipated ~~the~~ what energy was left.

The light was removed & the incident passed over as a good ~~late~~ story at smoke time.

So it was until ~~the~~ 2003 when it was found that ~~not only~~ there ^{was} serious concealed decay in the trunk where the two bolts had conducted ~~the~~ heat more deeply into the wood than would otherwise be the case. ~~but~~ On the upper side of the ^{high} branch which took the strike, ~~was~~ not ~~a~~ visible from below there was also extensive decay.

There was general consensus that this was terminal damage & the tree was felled in 23/1/04.