

The Newsletter of the Friends of Pukekura Park

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Neolentinus lepideus
– a conspicuous summer fungus.

Photo David Medway

Fungi - Overlooked yet ecologically essential

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Fred Parker – donor of Pukekura Park’s original orchid collection George Fuller

The late Fred Parker was a member of the Pukekura Park Committee in the 1960 era. Fred had established a superb garden in New Plymouth which was open to the public and became nationally famous. Few visitors to New Plymouth in the 1930-1960 period would not have visited Parker’s Gardens. Fred had a highly developed understanding of plants, and was able to propagate difficult subjects with ease, and cultivate and display to perfection. His garden was the most intensively planted garden I have seen anywhere in my travels. It was an absolute delight and a plant hunter’s paradise at any time of the year. Not only was Fred a master of both summer and winter bedding displays of annuals, but throughout the year there would be rare and/or spectacular shrubs or climbers and orchids in flower.

Before I went overseas in 1947 to learn specifically about orchids, which at that time were relatively uncommon in cultivation in New Zealand, I worked on Saturdays at Parker’s Gardens encouraged by contact with Fred’s orchids and his willingness to pass on his knowledge about them. I returned to New Zealand in 1964 to resettle, but with very little hope of finding employment associated with orchids. I found temporary work in Auckland assembling cars while seeking technician work at a university or horticultural research station. By pure coincidence, I paid a social call on Fred Parker at a time when, unbeknown to me, he had decided to donate his fine orchid collection to New Plymouth City but he wanted to be assured that it would be appropriately housed and cared for. Fred suggested that I may be “just the person for the task”, and asked if I was interested!

In 1965, I joined the Pukekura Park staff for general duties with special responsibility for inducting the orchid collection as it was made available. This commenced in November of that year.

The news that the Pukekura Park displays would be enhanced by the donation of Fred Parker’s orchid collection was readily accepted by the local authority, and finance was made available for the provision of necessary facilities. With his indomitable enthusiasm, Fred was up at the Park every day for months using his skills as a builder to physically ensure that the facilities came up to his standards. The collection of orchids was handed over in three stages, and became known as the Agnes Parker Orchid Collection in commemoration of the late Mrs Parker. Furthermore, it was endowed as a means of ensuring that it could be constantly updated. Subsequently, three glass houses providing divisions of cool, intermediate and warm climate for orchid genera were constructed at the New Plymouth Parks and Reserves Nursery at Brooklands.



This involved me in frequent movement between the Fernery and the Nursery, usually jogging, because long-distance running was my chosen sport.

Fred Parker’s donation of his orchid collection received much publicity, and news of it spread rapidly with an interesting and unexpected outcome. Offers of further orchids were received from far afield and, in some cases, there were donations of complete collections of rare and/or valuable orchids, usually because ageing orchid enthusiasts felt assured that their plants would be well cared for and kept together as a collection if at the Park.

The accompanying photographs, owned by George Fuller, show Fred Parker (above, in the black suit) donating his orchid collection to the Park, and Iolanthe Small (left) watering the new orchid collection.

Friends of Pukekura Park archive receives a unique contribution from the McDowell family

Karl Rossiter

A unique contribution has been received by the Friends as it commences the \$200,000 digital archiving project to preserve the history of Pukekura Park and Brooklands. On Christmas Eve, George Fuller knocked on my door grinning like the proverbial Cheshire cat. He was carrying a box of botanical drawings. It transpired that George was acting as courier for the McDowell family who had found the presumed lost botanical artwork of the late Ian McDowell.



Spiraea cantoniensis.

Ian McDowell (1937-2000), in the course of his employment with the Parks and Reserves Department of the New Plymouth City (later District) Council, was closely involved with Pukekura Park and Brooklands in various capacities from 1963 until his retirement in 1999. He was also a very competent artist. His talents included botanical drawings. It is his original botanical drawings of plants that are, or have been, in Pukekura Park and Brooklands that are now entrusted to the Friends for inclusion in the collaborative Friends/Puke Ariki digital archiving project. David Medway has found that these Ian McDowell botanical drawings were published in the gardening column of the *Taranaki Herald* between 1977 and 1980. Friends volunteers will scan, digitise and catalogue the original drawings.

The Friends extends a sincere thank you to Mrs Ann McDowell and her family for entrusting these drawings into our care.

A sample of the exquisite botanical detail embodied in them accompanies this acknowledgement.



Please contact the Friends if you would like to assist in the processing and scanning of the drawings. We now have the necessary equipment and other resources, and will provide training and guidance to volunteers. Your reward will be the satisfaction of helping to create a valuable Pukekura Park and Brooklands archive for use by future generations. We invite your interest and your participation.



Autumnal displays

Donna Christiansen

Technical Officer Fernery and Display Houses

2007 was another great year in the Fernery and Display Houses with an astounding 54,399 visitors. There were 14,837 more daytime visitors than in 2006. The signs which were purchased by the Friends in March 2007 can be credited for a number of these visitors. The Fernery and Display Houses, being on the Festival of the Lights circuit, were inundated with 16,000 visitors in December.

We have some interesting displays happening in the next few months. We are currently growing on a number of unusual vegetables for an autumn display. Rams Horn and Green Zebra Tomatoes, King of the Blues and Roquefort Beans, Palm Tree Di Toscana Cabbage, Golden Egg & Dok Eggplant, and many more interesting vegetables. Vegetable gardening is making a huge come-back. We thought it would be great to feature a few of the more unusual vegetables to inspire people to grow their own.



Fresh from the '20s - Donna & Chri

Tuberous Begonias adorn the Kibby House and we have a number of new additions to our collection. We are about to display our new collection of *Eucomis* (Pineapple Lily) hybrids, a bulb native to South Africa. *Eucomis* are now grown for cut flowers and exported to Japan and America. Eddie Welsh, a tutor at Massey University, has bred, propagated and exported *Eucomis* for the last twelve years. These are some of his selected hybrids. *Eucomis* have been featured in the collection for decades, so a few new hybrids are a great asset to our already large collection.

The *Hibiscus moscheutos* (Swamp Rose Mallow) are budding up, and are always a great talking point when they are on show. They are a woody perennial shrub native to eastern North America. They are winter dormant, then grow up to 1-1.5m flowering mid-summer.

Fungi

Overlooked yet ecologically essential

David Medway

The macrofungus *Neolentinus lepideus*, sometimes known as the Scaly Lentinus or Scaly Sawgill, is native to Europe and parts of North America where it grows singly or in groups on dead or decaying coniferous wood, particularly that of various *Pinus* species. Like numerous other fungi, *Neolentinus lepideus* was accidentally introduced to New Zealand at an unknown date and by an unknown means, but almost certainly it arrived in this country as spores on a suitable host plant.

Fruiting bodies of *Neolentinus lepideus* are of variable size, but some can be very large. The cap may grow up to about 25 cm across, while the stem may grow to about 12 cm in height. Its cap is at first convex but flattens with age, while its margin remains inrolled. The white, cream to pale-brown cap surface is distinctively covered in dark concentric scales which originate from a depression in the centre of the cap. The gills are white. Its stem has the same coloration as the cap, and most of the stem is also covered in dark scales.



I have found the conspicuous fruiting bodies of *Neolentinus lepideus* in Pukekura Park in the warmer months of October to March. All have been growing in the open on decaying stumps of *Pinus radiata* on the Japanese Hillside near Fountain Lake, beside Scanlan Walk, or at Scanlan Lookout.

Some authors consider *Neolentinus lepideus* to be edible, but others are more conservative and refrain from giving it that classification.

Chris Connolly
Curator Pukekura Park

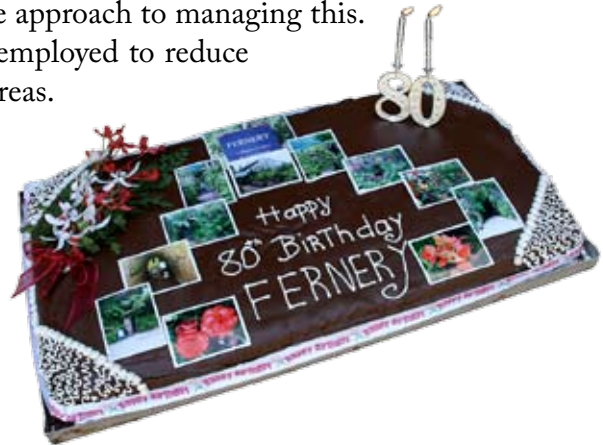
Summer & Celebrations



You will have made your resolutions for 2008, but just on the off-chance you could fit one more in can I suggest you resolve to join the Friends team on Thursday mornings assisting with maintenance in the Park. The contribution this team makes to the Park's presentation is valued, and if we can grow this team in numbers we will be able to achieve much more. The work is not too hard, and there is always time for a rest and a chat. I am sure you will find it a rewarding experience.

This summer the Park has again been inundated with thousands of visitors every week coming to see and enjoy the lights and entertainment which together create a unique and wonderful festive experience. Those involved work incredibly hard to put the events on and make them successful, but in recent years there have been growing concerns about the impact of these events on the Park and on its ability to sustain the numbers and level of use year after year. The effect on the Park is very evident again this year, particularly in areas where entertainment is being provided on a nightly basis. It is clear to me that there must be a change in the approach to managing this. Some new initiatives need to be employed to reduce the impact on the Park in these areas.

Celebrations to mark the 100th anniversary of the Park being named Pukekura went well with a tree planting on the eastern hillside. This event is described elsewhere in this Newsletter. This year's events of historical significance to the Park are the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Fernery, and the 50th anniversary of the Bowl of Brooklands.



Managing the trees of Pukekura Park and Brooklands

Karl Rossiter, President

The Friends of Pukekura Park has commenced a dialogue within the membership about the preferred tree policy for Pukekura Park and Brooklands. This will remain a focal issue for 2008. At a meeting of the Friends in November 2007 it was agreed that:

- the priority is to identify the Notable trees within Pukekura Park and Brooklands and to indicate them by GIS reference on official New Plymouth District Council maps. Notable trees are those of botanical, historical, ecological, or rarity significance. There are many Notable trees that need to be added to existing lists. This work is to be carried out during 2008 by the Friends in association with Park managers.
- the updated list of Notable trees is to be drawn to the attention of Park managers to ensure appropriate long term management of the specified trees.
- consideration needs to be given to the selection of appropriate tree species for canopy renewal, and whether natural regeneration processes should be given a "helping hand".
- a process of consultation needs to be instigated to ensure that planning, engineering and landscaping requirements are consistent with tree management and preservation.
- New Plymouth District Council planning and budget allocations need to provide for the least destructive methods of tree removal, and for a pest plant control regime to ensure successful regeneration of tree species.

Time to review the tree policy for Pukekura Park and Brooklands

Karl Rossiter, President

Some wonderful old trees, both native and exotic, are growing in Pukekura Park and Brooklands. While Brooklands hosts many mature native trees, the larger specimens in Pukekura Park are *Pinus radiata* that date back to the original plantings of the Recreation Grounds commencing in 1876.

Both native and exotic trees can reach enormous proportions, but it is the exotics that present immediate problems in Pukekura Park and Brooklands. In New Zealand, many exotic tree species tend to grow faster, and to reach their mature size more quickly, than they do in their native environments, but their life expectancy and durability may be reduced as a result. The original old pines in Pukekura Park and Brooklands are almost certainly now in their declining years, and have become more susceptible to branch drop and collapse.

A comparatively small *Pinus radiata* branch came down recently close to the Fernery and Display Houses. It caused much damage to surrounding vegetation and to the natural regeneration underneath, and it was just an average-sized branch! If the main tree was to topple the resulting damage would be colossal.

Should mature trees be removed and if so how?

Advanced arboricultural techniques certainly help to reduce understory damage, but damage free removal of full size trees probably requires helicopter lifting and that's very expensive! Another option is controlled poisoning, which allows more light to reach the understory and the progressive removal of the tree and its limbs.

Where natural damage occurs from fallen branches and trees should the affected area be left to regenerate, or should recovery be assisted?

The damage caused to understory and adjacent vegetation by fallen branches and trees may set back the regeneration process by many years. It is estimated that canopy replacement could be advanced by some twenty years if appropriate trees were intentionally established in a damaged area. But should we interfere with nature?



Minor branch drops.



Resulting damage.



A lot more to come!

Root upheaval.



Damage.



Another one over.



Pukekura Park rambblers

The monthly rambles along the less-frequented tracks and pathways of Pukekura Park and Brooklands continue. Recent rambles began at the southern end of Brooklands and are progressively moving northwards along tracks and pathways on both sides of the main Pukekura Park valley.

Recently Puke Ariki published an excellent booklet *Pukekura Park and Brooklands - a Guide to Walks*. It has very clear maps of the main trail and four circuits with plants and points of interest clearly identified in text and pictures. I recommend this to everyone wishing to increase their knowledge of the Park. A copy for perusal is held in the Fernery, and copies may be bought from the Kiosk or Puke Ariki shop for \$20.

Agnes Brabin



Photo Nui Biss

The December 2007 ramble, led by Heather Allen, began at the Kaimata Street entrance to Brooklands. The group went along the former Nature Trail, through Kauri Grove to Brooklands Drive, and up Brooklands Drive through Brooklands Park back to Kaimata Street.

Features of interest were pointed out and discussed as we went along. On the former Nature Walk and through Kauri Grove these included the King Fern (*Marattia salicina*) gully, several large native trees of different species, a very large London Plane (*Platanus x acerifolia*) tree that supports an ecosystem of its own, the Lawsoniana (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) shelter belt planted by Thomas Horton in 1942, Ambush Gully and the 1969 Arbor Day planting there and Kauri Grove and its regeneration following thinning of the

Kauri (*Agathis australis*) trees a few years ago. On Brooklands Drive, we noted that the Kousa Dogwood (*Cornus kousa*) trees growing on the southern slope of Rhododendron Dell were flowering well this year. From here we had a good view of the Smithers sculpture in the Lily Pond below. On Brooklands lawn, we discussed the notable Tea Camellia (*Camellia sinensis*), and the fireplace which is the only remnant of the first residence at Brooklands.

"Kobus"



Photo Karl Rossiter

The Friends of Pukekura Park successfully nominated Mary Morris for a New Plymouth Volunteer Recognition Award 2007. Mary has organised the Pukekura Park "Buggy Service" for less mobile visitors to the Park since 2000. She routinely drives the Buggy herself on a route taking in the sights and enthusing about the Park's history and happenings. Almost without exception, and often at very short notice, she makes herself available to greet, guide and assist less mobile visitors to Pukekura Park. Mary also willingly hosts and guides visiting tours to the Park. Mary is pictured on the right leading a group from Auckland.

Mary Morris can be contacted on (06) 758 9577.

Renaming of Recreation Grounds remembered

Karl Rossiter

The Recreation Grounds Board, after a long debate at its monthly meeting on 6 November 1907, resolved by a narrow majority to change the name of the grounds, until then known as the Recreation Grounds, to Pukekura Park. A full account of the meeting, and of the resolution, appeared in the *Taranaki Herald* of 7 November 1907.

One hundred years later, on 20 November 2007, three commemorative trees were planted on the Eastern Hillside of Pukekura Park to acknowledge the name change. They are a Bunya-Bunya (*Araucaria bidwillii*), native to Queensland, Australia; a Corsican Pine (*Pinus nigra laricio*), native to southern Italy, Sicily, and Corsica; and a Manchurian Fir (*Abies holophylla*), native to northern China and Korea. Representatives of the Friends planted the *Pinus nigra laricio*, the Mayor (Peter Tennent) planted the *Abies holophylla*, and four-year old twins Ethan and Mac Rowe from the Pukekura Kindergarten assisted Park Curator, Chris Connolly, with the planting of the *Araucaria bidwillii*. Cameron Burnell is the *Taranaki Daily News* photographer getting up-close in the accompanying photograph of the planting.



Photo Karl Rossiter

Friends in action

Many spades make planting easy!

George and Bev Moratti

A well-coordinated working bee on 27 September 2007 had the Friends volunteer team assisting Pukekura Park staff to plant 152 ornamental conifers on Monument Hill before the summer dryness set in. It's amazing what can be achieved by a twelve-strong planting team. Two hours and they were all in. Next day it rained!



Photos G & B Moratti



Ian Hutchinson, Technical Officer Pukekura, reminds us that historically there has been a conifer collection on Monument Hill, so that is why the theme has been continued. Several larger conifer and other specimens were removed a few years ago to let more light into the site, so Ian opted to make use of low growing shrubby ornamental conifers to preserve that light and keep the site open and airy. His selection has conifers with coloured or interesting foliage. After about ten years this new collection will range in height from 0.5m to just over 2m. Ian has provided the following list of the conifers planted on Monument Hill on 27 September 2007:

5 x *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Araucarioides'; 4 x *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Spiralis'; 10 x *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Globosa Nana'; 10 x *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Filifera Nana'; 6 x *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Gold Spangle'; 10 x *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Kosterii'; 10 x *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis'; 10 x *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Aurea'; 7 x *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Tetragona Aurea'; 10 x *Juniperus x media* 'Blauw'; 10 x *Juniperus x media* 'Gold Coast'; 10 x *Juniperus squamata* 'Meyeri'; 10 x *Thuja occidentalis* 'Rheingold'; 10 x *Thuja occidentalis* 'Filiformis'; 10 x *Podocarpus nivalis*; 5 x *Podocarpus macrophyllus*; 5 x *Podocarpus macrophyllus* 'Maki'.

If you would like to join the dedicated Friends volunteer team that works in Pukekura Park or Brooklands each Thursday morning, please contact either of us on (06) 751 4406. We would love to expand our team which works alongside the staff and undertakes a range of fascinating horticultural tasks. Friends volunteers prune, plant and propagate throughout Pukekura Park and Brooklands. The latest request is for the Friends to grow vegetables for the zoo animals. Please come and join us, it's fun, rewarding and thoroughly interesting.