

## The Kaimata Street Shelter Belt

David Medway

On my “Plants for birds” walk at Brooklands on 10 August 2005, we followed the former Nature Trail through Ambush Gully and the rows of tall Lawsoniana (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) that grow parallel to Kaimata Street on the southern boundary of the park. While we were at the Lawsoniana, the inevitable two questions were asked - who planted those trees, and how old are they? It is now possible to provide definitive answers to both.

Thomas Horton was Curator of Pukekura Park (to which Brooklands was added in 1934) for 25 years from 1924 until 1949. Fortuitously, a collection of Horton’s papers still survives in the Pukekura Park archive at Puke Ariki in New Plymouth. Among them is his work diary for the period 13 August 1937 to 9 November 1943, and a report on Brooklands, dated 30 December 1933, that Horton and Thomas Boulton, Newton King’s head gardener, provided to the Pukekura Park Board. This report was published in full in the *Taranaki Herald* of 10 January 1934. In it Horton and Boulton said, under the heading Shelter Belt: “All that area between Messrs Grundy, Bond & Shepherd’s boundary, on the western side of the bush, we suggest be planted with suitable shelter trees; and that this shelter be extended (at least half a chain wide) along the whole of the southern side of the bush to Mr List’s gully”.



Kaimata Street Lawsoniana  
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David Medway explores the Kaimata Street shelter belt ©Karl Rossiter

This shelter belt was not planted until nine years later. Horton recorded in his work diary that five men spent 22 and 23 July 1942 planting trees at “Brooklands, Kaimata St.”. He listed the trees they planted on those days as 106 five-year old and 20 three-year old Lawsoniana, 40 five-year old Totara (*Podocarpus totara*), 40 four-year old Kowhai (*Sophora microphylla*), and 24 Rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) age not stated.

Today, several rows of planted Totara and Lawsoniana are growing on the Kaimata Street frontage of the park over a distance of about 125 metres from the Brooklands Road end. There are some 30 Totara in this section. At the eastern end of these rows, above the small gully containing the large London Plane (*Platanus acerifolia*) tree, is a group of about twelve Lawsoniana, probably planted there to provide extra protection at this exposed position. Interspersed among the Lawsoniana and Totara are several tall Rewarewa and a few tall Kowhai. All of these trees must be part of the shelter belt that was planted on 22 and 23 July 1942.

Originally, this shelter belt extended eastward along the Kaimata Street boundary effectively as far as “Mr List’s gully”, now Maranui Gully, as Horton and Boulton in 1933 suggested it should. This portion seems to have consisted mostly of Lawsoniana, nearly all of which have since been felled. The rows of Lawsoniana that once grew on the western boundary between the park and the private properties to which Horton and Boulton referred were undoubtedly part of the same shelter belt planting. They were still standing in August 1968, but the row closest to Kaimata Street was felled, probably soon after that date, to be replaced by the camellias which grow on that boundary now.

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Abstract:

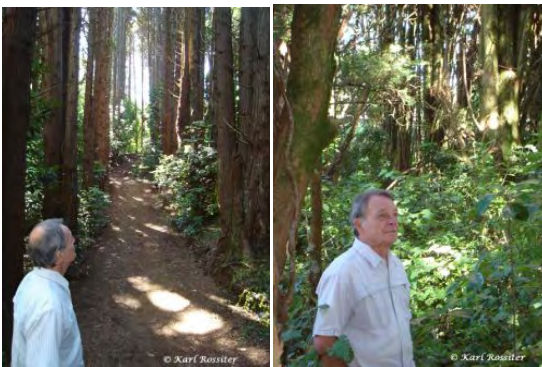
David Medway examines the history surrounding the planting of the shelter belt on the southern boundary of Brooklands Park and Pukekura Park in New Plymouth. The now mature trees bordering Kaimata Street, and originally extending to what is now known as Maranui Gully, include Lawsoniana, Totara, Kowhai and Rewarewa. A report provided to the Pukekura Park Board in 1933 by Park Curator Thomas Horton, and Newton King's head gardener Thomas Boulton, records planning details of the proposed shelter belt. Horton's diary reveals that the actual planting did not occur until July 1942. Archival documents enable comparisons between the current status of the shelter belt, and the original plantings. Two colour photographs are included.

Key words:

Pukekura Park, Brooklands Park, New Plymouth, Taranaki, New Zealand, Kaimata Street shelter belt, Thomas Horton, Thomas Boulton, List Gully, Maranui Gully, Lawsoniana (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*), historical papers, Horton diary.

*Pukekura Park Kaimata Street shelter belt photos: click on a photo to view a larger image, use Back button to return*

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