

## **The Plight of the Notable Puriri Located Close beside the Access Road between the Racecourse and the Bowl of Brooklands**

I was, until retirement in 1990, Curator of Pukekura Park/Brooklands (the Park) for twenty five years.

In February of this year, the executive of Friends of Pukekura Park (FoPP) were notified of a major upgrading of the stabling facilities at the Racecourse that would impact severely on a number of native trees surrounding the existing road.

The layout design, upon which construction work was already well advanced, rendered the current road no longer workable and a fait accomli proposal for the re-alignment of the upper half of the road was proffered for scrutiny. Included was a map of the area and a copy of some of the negotiations which had taken place with New Plymouth District Council officialdom.

Since I have a background of knowledge relating to trees and had in fact been involved in the planting of several specimens now under threat of destruction, I was asked for my observations on the proposal.

In the very limited time available, I prepared a survey of the area based on colour-coded survey pegs. I plotted the location of each tree within their bounds. This did not conform either in location or number with those marked on the plan.

A total of 25 trees were in the expansive drop-zone defined by the batter pegs. They ranged from recently planted saplings to mature full-canopy trees of natural origin.

The native species under greatest threat numerically by the proposal is kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*) and as the stand of ten comprises a strategic shelter belt protecting other members of the colony, I confined my observations of concern to the one species partly because of the constraints of time. I submitted the results of my findings to FoPP executive.

Uneasy about the magnitude of tree loss in the proposal plus collateral wind damage which would almost certainly be a consequence, the FoPP executive proposed an alternative modification (Option 2) which would require only the top quarter of the road to be re-aligned and confine removal threat to only a few recently planted kauri (*Agathis australis*) saplings.

A major matter of contention common to both proposals is the welfare of a large puriri with a trunk diameter just over 2m and therefore close to that of the framed specimen near the Kaimata St. entrance to Brooklands Park. However, presumably due to greater exposure to winds crossing the plateau on which the Racecourse is located, this specimen branches heavily at a low-level giving it a squat format.

The original re-alignment proposal demands a deep twenty plus meter wide cutting to the north and west of the tree requiring the taking out of 10 mature kohekohe which provide it with shelter from prevailing winds which originate from that quarter. This re-alignment would totally bypass the tree.

The FoPP alternative retains the section of original road past the puriri but defects towards the town (north) just above it, arriving at the same starting point as the original proposal. No mature trees require removal.

Not completed

Compiled for FoPP by George Fuller