

Background history of access routes between the Racecourse and Bowl of Brooklands

The racecourses plateau has always provided a very handy short walking distance parking area for large numbers of patrons of the Bowl.

Originally only pedestrian access was possible between parking and venue. This was via a wide zigzag path on the opposite side of the dell to the present road. It joined the Maranui Walk about 25m up from the Bowl boundary fence and was illuminated. By an interesting coincidence a very large and low-branched puriri was also featured growing within touching distance on one edge of the path. It is located immediately across the dell and opposite the tree at the centre of the current concern and also has notable tree status for several reasons which become obvious when viewed.

The popularity of performances at the Bowl grew very rapidly and a decision was made to develop a more direct route with vehicle capacity to enable bus and lorry access. The current single lane access road was the outcome. I have not yet found a date, but it was probably in the early 1960s.

With the administrative dynamics of the day I suspect that the task was planned and executed with minimum formality. I would not be surprised if someone with a bulldozer offered help and formation virtually 'just happened' without paperwork.

Obtaining an even gradient and upper entry/exit point required excavation of soil to form a cutting in the first 35m of the original access road. Widening by dumping fill was required to negotiate past the large puriri lower down and extended several metres beyond. I imagine that it was a simple 'cut and fill' operation with a bulldozer. The extent of the latter would no doubt have depended on the volume of spoil required to be removed to excavate the former. No attempt seems to have been made to key the base of the fill and one only speculates on the level of effort taken to compact the fill.

The remnants of native forest existent within the confines of the adjoining Maranui Gully and other restricted areas of Brooklands Park (not Pukekura) are recognized by international experts as typical of tropical rainforest, not sub-tropical or temperate and surprisingly have higher densities of epiphytes (perching) species than is found in the tropics. To have this admired colony surviving so vigorously within 2km of the city centre makes it unique and every specimen therefore precious.

We are obviously custodians and beneficiaries of unique biological phenomena. It is my belief that to remove or even threaten the existence of a single tree in this exclusively native area in the name of entertainment at both ends of the road without very highly justified reason is not what would be expected of a Local Body which has just gained international fame for its environmentally sensitive activity along its coastal environs. This does not compute.

Compiled for FoPP by George Fuller May 2009