

CATALOGUE	OH/GEN/275
NAME	FULLER George
ADDRESS	Torbay Street, New Plymouth
DATE	26/7/1998
INTERVIEWER	-
ABSTRACTOR	LAMBERT Floss
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RESTRICTIONS	nil
TAPE	one of four

PUKEKURA PARK TOUR

- 00.1 George Fuller is taking a group around Pukekura park to introduce interesting and historical features. This is the third of a series. 1) Northern end of Gilbert St walked through. 2) One more to cover Brooklands. 3) 5km Northern end of Park east side, Brooklands, Maranui Gully & down the other side. It is a lovely July, mid winter day - there are droughts and floods elsewhere. Heather is assisting with the taping.

The group is standing on a grass triangle, south of the boatshed bridge, both of which have been here a long time. Originally there were 2 rimus, a matai, a miro and a kauri (which is still here). George describes the method of removing sludge from the lake which destroyed all vegetation except the rimus. Also the sludge was stockpiled under the trees. This changed the environment & prevented air from reaching the roots so that the trees died.

07.6 MONUMENT HILL

This name was given to a small mound. Staff members erected a monument to Mr Wiggins, a Boer War casualty (early 1900s) but it was neglected and disappeared, causing a bit of trouble. A food pit, the only remaining vestige of Maori presence in the area is also visible.

10.6 THE AREA IN 1875, ROAD NAME CHANGE

back over the Boatshed Bridge. In 1975 this gully was completely treeless and there was no lake, only 2 little streams meeting. Gorse, blackberry and tutu were rampant and there was a fort at each end during the 1860s land wars. The group rambles over the bridge to the west side of the ridge on which the Gables and Brooklands are situated; then down through a native tree plantation back to Brooklands Drive corner. Old maps show Victoria Road as being Carrington Street and visa versa.

14.5 A MEDITERRANEAN PINE, NEW PLYMOUTH'S GRID PATTERN

Back towards the boatshed George points out a Mediterranean pine and also a depression line on the hill which was an early boundary or road, now declassified. He describes New Plymouth's original grid pattern. Roads which commenced on Coronation Ave were mapped across the racecourse and joined up exactly with those on Brooklands Rd. The race course, was meant to be a subdivision as a housing area (1880s).

17.6 A CAMELLIA, TOTARAS, PINES, A RHODODENDRON

East of the boatshed bridge is an early camellia. Through a totara planted area and back towards the kiosk are pines

from which turpentine is made. George discusses young and old cones. Up to a walkway where he points out rhododendron Sir Thomas Peel, which has been pushed out over the lake by totara growth. the largest known is growing near Hamilton. It has 46 trunks and a ground span of 27 metres.

26.9 THE RIFLE RANGE, SOME SKYLINE TREES

there are 3 walks from the kiosk. From this one, the old rifle range may be seen. In the 1860s firing took place from Victoria Road. The hillside was excavated 3 to 4 metres high and 20 metres long. A red flag was raised and firing at the butts commenced. Some skyline trees planted in the 1870s are pointed out. To George's annoyance, contracts were arranged to remove them without his knowledge.

The tape stops abruptly here

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PUKEKURA PARK TOUR cont

- 00.1 The group is still of the rifle range above the boatshed bridge. An orienteering mark No38 is pointed out at the end of the butts and George notes another tree causing more clutter. There are two big pines, one each side of the path, radiata and penasta. Cones are of different shapes and the penaster bark is more beautiful. The soil is a mass of knuckle like roots which form the base to the path.
- 02.6 A NORFOLK PINE, SKYLINE TREES
Saxton Walk, east of Poets Bridge. there are big gaps where specimens have been removed. Note: all is calm where the tour party is standing but pines are waving powerfully in the wind. The big Norfolk Pine is the tallest tree in the park; it is the Christmas Cross tree. On the eastern hillside above the kiosk are two skyline kauri trees. Strategic planting is necessary to maintain the skyline height. Radiata pines are quick growing but kauri take 300 - 400 years to achieve maturity. George tells how all hell broke loose when dangerous trees had to be felled. Pines were put in for rapid growth.
- 06.1 RECAPITULATION
At Poet's bridge, George reminds the group of the 1876 reserve being set aside and the damming of the first and second man-made lakes.
- 07.4 HUGHES'S WALK; SEWERS; PHOTOS; REDWOODS
Mr Hughes was the founder of the Park and a member of the committee formed (1876) to set aside the valley as a reserve. He died in 1934. Hughes Walk was surveyed by Skinner. In the 1870s it almost became the tram route from New Plymouth to Vogletown. An 1880 photo displayed shows very little vegetation. The Newton King house on the Brooklands Park skyline is pointed out, as are manhole covers which mark the course of the Vogletown sewer. George has horror stories about sewer blockages when contents ooze into the lake. Swimming, of course, was discouraged although the lake was originally designed as a swimming pool. In the 1960s, there was a bathing hut with Dicky Barrett's cannon arranged beside it. Another old 1880s photo shows the area completely clear of vegetation, like a paddock. George describes the changes wrought by showing a series of three photos. The removal of sludge from the lake is described (Kowhai trees have been replanted). A dragline was taken out to the island on the right, originally, but a machine is used now. A well known tree is mentioned, a redwood which was thought to be extinct but which was found in China in the 1940s. John Goodwin planted

it in the 1950s.

18.1 TOWARDS THE EAST

The oaks on the Shortland Street entrance are noted. When an engineering drainage problem occurred (Holsworthy Rd) a line was surveyed through the trees without the Park Committee's knowledge and a storm blew up. However, a solution was discovered without trees being threatened and peace prevailed again.

21.5 HUGHES WALK; TOPPING OAKS; A MURDER

A pipeline was put through here without endangering skyline oak trees. The mountain view was lost as the oaks grew so George 'topped' them in 1966 with a handsaw. Chainsaws are used now. George tells a gruesome story as regards a very disturbed High School boy (a truant) who was using a stiletto to dismember mamaku. In spite of George's warning, the High School, the boy eventually murdered his sister. Staff became readily able to sense truants and people with problems.

27.9 THE BIG DIGGER; SEWER PROBLEMS; THE FROGS

A winter job was the cleaning out of the whole lake from an island (pointed out). The Inglewood contractor first laid a firm base on which to work and bring in a big digger. George describes changes in the water flow in the arms of the stream flowing from Struan Walk. Eventually the ditch became so messy it had to be filled in. The 150 metre 6 inch sewer pipe coming from the Bowl of Brooklands meets the Vogletown sewer in the lowest permissible gradient, consequently it flows slowly and blocks readily. George relates a horror story as regards a 14,000 crowd when the sewers were performing and the sewer blew up in several places. In the early 1980s he recalls hearing strange frog like noises in the bank towards the boat shed bridge.

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PUKEKURA PARK TOUR cont

00.1 SOME UNIQUE FROGS; POSSUMS

Mr Wilkinson, the herpetologist was most excited because these unusual frogs were not supposed to be here and had not been recorded in NZ before. The males only have a high pitched call. George tells of his experiences with the frogs and gives their life history. The tour party goes across Struan Walk near Brooklands Drive Corner. Possums are discussed and George tells of spotlights and shotguns and the 50 or so destroyed annually because of the depredations.

05.1 TREES AT THE SOUTHERN END; JACK GOODWIN & TRUBY KING DELLS

Stumps remain of the many macrocarpa and pines taken down in the early 80's. He describes the Vogletown/Hori Street catchment area. Photos are shown of the lakeside walk and path to the boat shed with the 1876 rimus and totaras and changes are mentioned. Streams from Brooklands and Vogelton Parks are continuous although down in summer. the tour party goes past the culvert entrance to teh Goodwin Dell. Jack Goodwin was originally Superintendent in 1947 and then Director of NP Parks dept. George gives a resume of Jack's work and his foresight, talents and wisdom. A man called Stead bread azalea mollis in Christchurch and Jack acquired a collection for the Dell - also in the 1950s, for the Truby King Dell. A favourite N American tree of Jack's is mentioned, also a pecan nut from that same country.

14.3 THE BOATSHED BRIDGE; KAURIS; THE PARK SIGNS.

The boatshed bridge is reached and the party carries on towards the brooklands Bowl and Monument Hill. In the 1970s a conifer collection was planted there. This is as far as the boats are able to go. Two kauri are pointed out. In 1935/36 Duncan and Davies produced thousands of kauri and gave one to each Taranaki School. George gives a short kauri life history and then show the first kauri and totara planted in the park. The Friends of the Park volunteers to attach the tree signs. W W Smith, in 1910, records their planting. City of NP has the biggest planting of kauri (4000) in NZ. George continues with the structure and peculiarities of the kauri.

26.3 THE RHODODENDRON DELL; SIR VICTOR DAVIES; THE MAZE

The tour party is now in Brooklands Bowl Rhododendron dell (1934). George bewails the loss of tree and toilet signs from vandalism. There are also three houses of NZ ferns, a successful venture needed for the preservation of all fern species.

Sir Victor Davies contracted firms in England and imported rhododendron for the dell, which eventually became the best collection in NZ. The main Park gates were erected from the Saunders bequest which was also the means of acquiring the rhodo collection. Somewhere in the park there is a maze; it was probably in the rhodo dell.

Totaras were planted here in the 1880s; they are not originals. George refers back to the Kauri planting - in a perfectly straight line, a fastidious detail.

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PUKEKURA PARK TOUR cont

00.1 RHODODENDRON DELL TREES ON WAY TO PARK; LABELS; POSSUMS

Several special trees are mentioned by George - a 50m kahikatea, tallest of native trees, very old Kowhai which flower before the Rhodos and house as many a 10 tui (bell birds too) in each tree. Mt Everest, a white rhodo, a Nepalese Aboreum (used as firewood in Nepal) and rhodo 'Sir Robert Peel'. An orchid waterfall is noted in a kowhai. High School Boys sometimes switch the labels causing untold misery. Lancewoods (Juvenile and adult), a summer flowering magnolia, oaks, planes and elms are pointed out. Possums choose favourite trees and thus are easily located, shot at and killed.

10.3 CHESTNUTS; PLANES; RHODODENDRONS

The Japanese sweet chestnut will not graft successfully on the European variety. The 1840s-60s northern hemisphere trees have reached their life span and are beginning to die. Planes with their canopy lift are excellent shade for the rhododendrons which were continually being added to by Allan Jellyman and Jack Goodwin.

14.4 TOTARA; SOUTH EAST WIND; LOMBARDY POPLARS

Half way through the Dell a stand of totara had to be cleared of their lower branches. George describes the problem of double headers - eg a rimu is mentioned. SE winds and particularly Cyclone Bola caused damage problems. A stand of kahikatea will be a lovely future group and a lawson pine is pointed out. East towards the racecourse, lombardy poplars define a paper road and puriris have survived. Primula perennials are mentioned.

19.1 CANOPY REMOVAL; HILLSIDE MOWING

George discusses the habits of two planes in Brooklands Drive. Canopy raising is a big job and very dangerous. It can take more than 25 years for healing to take place. Once ladders, ropes and chainsaws had to be left during the weekend and unbelievably, the ropes were stolen. It was a mighty job to remove them. The heavy mower used on the hillside sometimes 'got away' and rolled down the hill.

24.3 THE BROOKLANDS DAM; SOME SPECIAL TREES; VIC SWANN

The tour party has reached the lake formed by Brooklands dam. This was Newton King's land and private plantings were made. Recent flooding almost wrecked Brooklands lake which began to overflow. Taiwan cherries bring an influx of tui and waxeyes into the garden. Looking back, two miles of lombardy poplars look 'scappy'. A 'tree' rhodo and a

special magnolia are mentioned, as is Vic Swann, a reliable and conscientious staff member. His ashes lie beneath the magnolia. George now tells some amusing stories about Vic Swann. However the tape runs out and the last story is unfinished.