

12 Victoria Road,  
NEW PLYMOUTH.

29th March, 1948.

Mr. E. Hutt,  
Director of Parks and Reserves,  
Town Hall,  
WELLINGTON.

Dear Mr. Hutt,

Following my conversation with you on Saturday and your gracious agreement to submit to the Pukekura Park Committee your views on the matters discussed, I would be grateful if you would frame your report in the form of answers to the following series of questions:-

(1) Development of street frontage along Victoria Road from the north-west corner of the park to the junction of Victoria Road and Shortland Street.

For your information this question is at the moment the major one facing the committee. In May, 1939, the committee served notice on the Park Tennis and Croquet Club (which occupies park property) that it required possession of the land occupied by the club for tree planting purposes. The reason was that as the life of the pinus trees on the east side of the courts was now very limited it was necessary to plant shelter and "height" trees close to Victoria Road, both in order to give the park shelter from the prevailing westerly wind and in order to create a height of background to the main lake when the pinus trees die or have to be felled.

Owing to the war no action was taken. During the past year, when action was again being considered, considerable controversy occurred, because the Park Tennis and Croquet Club felt it could not undertake the costly task of moving and establishing itself elsewhere.

A search was made for alternatives, and two were suggested.

One was that a strip of say 20 feet along the east side of the tennis courts be resumed by the committee and shelter and other trees be planted along this strip (presumably the tennis players would still have to find a home elsewhere, but the croquet players would remain and occupy all the available ground).

The other was that the half dozen or so tall pinus trees nearest to the tennis courts be felled immediately, and a line or two of trees be planted in the vacant space close alongside the tennis courts boundary fence, which would be moved a few feet closer to the tennis playing area.

Unanimity could not be reached by the members of the park committee. Those who advocate complete resumption of the tennis and croquet area consider that the development of the park will be prejudiced for all time if the compromise suggestions are adopted.

Those who favour one or other of the compromises consider that sufficient shelter for the main body of the park can be obtained by the compromises mentioned.

It is proper to mention (1) that the park superintendent Mr. Thos. Horton, who originally advocated full resumption and still considers it the best solution, now supports one of the compromises as affording adequate shelter and meeting the wishes of the tennis and croquet players; and (2) that the borough council, already financially embarrassed, foresees being asked to increase its contribution to Pukekura Park substantially, also to assist the tennis and croquet players in establishing a home.

From this background the following three questions are submitted to you.



29th March (2)

- (A) What course do you recommend as being in the best interests of the park and its future development?
- (B) If you favour full resumption and planting of the area occupied by the tennis and croquet players, do you consider either of the proposed alternatives would be reasonably satisfactory, bearing in mind the tennis and croquet issue?
- (C) Whatever your recommendation, what form of planting or other development of this area do you recommend?

(2) Cannon Hill, at the north end of the lake.

Question (D):- What are your views on the development of this hill?

(3) Fillis Street Gully.

Question (E) What are your views on the development of this gully of approximately five acres, bearing in mind that it is already partly planted, but has no public access or paths?

(4) Hill on East Side of Main Lake, between Lake and Racecourse.

Question (F):- What are your views on the development of this area, bearing in mind that there is at present very little planting on this hill apart from the pinus trees, which presumably have a limited life?

(5) Fernery and Begonia Houses.

Question (G):- Do you recommend continuation of this feature in the present form?

Question (H):- What is your reaction to the possibility of discontinuing the begonia display as an economy measure?

(6) General Development of Park.

Question (I):- What are your views and/or recommendations on the general development of the park as a whole, and any particular part of it not scheduled above, bearing in mind (a) the international fame of Pukekura Park and the need for preserving the distinctive features that created its reputation; (b) the need for a long-sighted view rather than a short-sighted one; (c) the remedying of any weaknesses or deficiencies in the park at present?

(7) Administration and Staff.

Question (J):- What do you consider is the minimum reasonable annual income required by the committee to maintain and develop the area of approximately 150 acres comprising Pukekura Park, Brooklands and the adjoining Maranui and Highlands additions, bearing in mind that almost the only income apart from bequests is borough council subsidy, and the borough council has at present a very limited pocket?

Note: The borough council subsidy for the year ending March 31st, 1948 is estimated to be £22,045, and the committee's deficiency on the year's working to be £1,335.

Question (K):- What in your opinion is the size and nature of the staff required to maintain and develop the above-mentioned 150 acres, including sportsground and fernery and begonia houses (a) if the park superintendent is also superintendent of the whole of the parks and reserves in New Plymouth (see attached list); (b) if he is confined substantially to the area under discussion?

Question (L):- Have you any particular recommendation relative to the boats on the main lake and the problem of maintaining boat and fernery supervision during week-ends and public holidays?

Yours faithfully,

D. F. C. SAXTON?  
Chairman,  
Pukekura Park Committee.



PUKEKURA PARK.

Report on questions submitted as per letter 29/3/48.

(Croquet & Tennis Court Area)

- A. What course do you recommend as being in the best interests of the Park and its future development?

Replant with suitable trees an area from roadside, in front, with low evergreen ornamental trees, inside, medium growing ornamental trees, middle, large growing evergreen trees of a permanent nature and that will stand wind, westerly and southerly and give the required height in approximately 30 to 40 years. This planting would take an approximately 50-60 ft. strip inside road boundary. Leave further planting inside this belt, until old pines have been felled, in about 10-15 years, and then plant the Eastern side of this new belt with large, medium, bright coloured trees. The total area being a strip about 100 to 185 ft. wide. Trees to be put in of somewhat a similar nature of growth, but ones that will give an irregular skyline.

- B. If you favour full resumption and planting of the area occupied by the tennis and croquet players, do you consider either of the proposed alternatives would be reasonably satisfactory, bearing in mind the tennis and croquet issue?

Alternative schemes would be most suitable.

- B (1) New planting would be partly destroyed when removing old trees.
- B (2) Tall trees would be too far into the park, as at present, and when matured, would again open underneath. The beauty of the park, is the framework of tall trees, which should at all times be aimed at, and put back to the boundaries as far as possible, and a dense undergrowth kept, especially on the west side.
- B (3) Area left would be very narrow, subject to fall of leaves and needles, would be affected by trees, roots shade and overhang of branches.
- B (4) Finally, this area would be given up, being used for croquet and then be left as an isolated area to be replanted.
- C. Whatever your recommendation, what form of planting or other development of this area would you recommend?

This is answered in A and B.

2. CANNON HILL.

- D. What are your views on the development of this hill?

Cannon Hill which gives one of the best views in the park is very neglected owing to shortage of labour, a view can only be obtained one way, towards the superintendent's house, instead of a panorama.

- D (1) Remove useless poor undergrowth, also trees blocking panoramic view, good trees can have their stems cleaned up to give a view underneath and still provide shade.
- D (2) Plant a few more very tall evergreen and deciduous trees on the North side of the hill, ones to give height and shade, as shelter is not so important here.
- D (3) No further planting to be done on the front (South) side of the hill.
- D (4) At a later period, improved access could be given.



## FILLIS STREET GULLY.

E. What are your views on the development of this gully of approximately five acres, bearing in mind that it is already planted, but has no public access or paths?

E (1) Soil in the lower area is good, but at present weed-infested and is being used as a rubbish dump. There are some exceptionally fine and rare specimens of New Zealand trees in this area.

Attend immediately to all good planted native trees by cutting back growth of trees, weeds and climbers, remove any double heads in trees such as Kauri, Tanekaha, Rimu etc.

E (2) As soon as funds permit, cut all fern on hillside and keep mown and burnt once a year.

E (3) Flat area. This would make an ideal croquet area, several courts could be made with very little expense, as spoil is alongside, and the area is free from all winds. The portion of the flat area near Fillis Street is lower than the previous area and this could be set down as a lower court, or could be used by the borough as a depot for spare clean soil and bring it up to the present level. Several good specimens of rare native trees are on the flat area, practically all these could be removed to form a division between the courts, or to the sides of the valley.

E (4) Foot entrance could be made at both ends of the Pohutukawa hedge; this hedge also requires heading this winter, sides are already trimmed. When funds permit, tracks should be made along the banks both sides from entrances and one track to connect through to tea kiosk.

## HILL ON EAST SIDE OF MAIN LAKE.

F. What are your views on the development of this area bearing in mind that there is at present very little planting on this hill apart from the pinus trees, which presumably have a limited life?

F (1) Plant trees on the same plan as is recommended on the Western side of the park. Whatever planting is done, provision should be made for the felling and removing of the large trees in about 10 to 15 years - a few trees may have to be removed earlier if they should become decayed or leaning too much. Height is again required, but trees must be further back and of a permanent nature.

## FERNERY AND BEGONIA HOUSES.

G. Do you recommend continuation of this feature in its present form?

The fernery is a great attraction to the park and should be kept up if possible.

G (1) Begonias should be confined to two compartments, the entrance, and the upper chamber. Some other bright attractive permanent flowering plants should be introduced that would give a show before and after the begonias. The Lapagerias are a great attraction. Begonias could be shown to better advantage and give just as good a display to the average public, if they were spaced a little more in the Begonia chamber, they would require less pots, therefore less expense.

G (2) This area is called the Park Fernery. The collection was once probably the finest growing collection in New Zealand, but now is very sadly depleted, and if it is still to retain the name and reputation, the whole collection should be renewed and collectors asked to again send in any rare ferns they could collect. If a small committee of fern enthusiasts could be formed into a committee to co-operate with the superintendent



in the collecting and replanting of the fernery, with the rarer varieties, the attendance of fern lovers all over New Zealand would be assured. Ferns cost far less to maintain than most other types of indoor plants.

- H. What is your reaction to the possibility of discontinuing the begonia display as an economy measure?

This is answered in G and I.

#### GENERAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARK.

- I. What are your views and/or recommendations on the general development of the park as a whole, and any particular parts of it not scheduled above, bearing in mind (a) the international fame of Pukekura Park and the need for preserving the distinctive features that created its reputation; (b) the need for a long-sighted view rather than a short-sighted one; (c) the remedying of any weaknesses or deficiencies in the park at present?

This Park and others, cannot be expected to progress until a Superintendent of all parks and reserves in New Plymouth is appointed. A curator under the Superintendent, in Pukekura Park, with a first-class working horticultural foreman, who is expert in all work, and could supervise; and then a small staff of first-class workmen, not necessarily horticulturists. These men to be paid accordingly to their ability. This system would enable the work to be carried out in a very economical manner.

Pukekura Park is world famous and must be kept up by the Borough and townspeople, as this asset is of very great value to every business in New Plymouth.

Yours faithfully,

V. C. DAVIES,

Westown,  
May 6, 1948.



P.O.Box 119,  
NEW PLYMOUTH,  
May 4th 1948.

The Secretary,  
Pukekura Park Committee,  
NEW PLYMOUTH.

Dear Sir,

As the committee will shortly be receiving reports from Mr. E. Hutt, Director of Parks and Reserves, Wellington, and Mr. V.C. Davies, New Plymouth, on the future development of Pukekura Park, I submit also some points for consideration quite independent of Messrs. Hutt and Davies so that members of the committee may consider the three reports in conjunction when next inspecting the park.

For the sake of clarity I submit my comments under separate headings.

#### Tennis and Croquet Club Area.

For reason already advanced I am convinced that in the interests of all three parties concerned, the park, the tennis club and the croquet club, the committee should resume the area occupied by the tennis and croquet players, and have it planted. During the past months I have spent many days in the park, examining it from all angles and considering various alternatives, and am to-day stronger than ever in my belief that any alternatives short of resumption of the full area under discussion would be a short sighted and irreparable blunder for which we would justly earn the condemnation of posterity.

I submit that we require the area for shelter, but just as potent a reason is the necessity to plant tall "skyline", or background trees further away from the main lake than is possible with the courts in their present position.

In my opinion two major artistic weaknesses detract from the otherwise magnificent and unique beauty of Pukekura Park. They are the lack of colour in the flora, and the fact that the skyline background east and west of the main lake is crowded in too close on to the lake.

I therefore advocate the course suggested, the planting of tall, quick-growing background trees west of the brow of the hill, shelter and perhaps ornamental trees between the skyline trees and Victoria Road, and clumps of colour trees along the side of the hill east of the skyline trees.

I contend that the tennis courts can never be increased in their present position, but on the other hand will suffer increasingly from shade, leaves and tree roots; also that the croquet courts can never be satisfactory in a position where a third of their area is damp and mossy from the shade of trees.

I suggest as an ideal home for croquet the flat area of the park fronting Gover Street, and for the tennis players Brooklands or some other public reserve where they could get security of tenure and room for expansion.

Could not all interested parties and the public combine to help the tennis and croquet players to go elsewhere?

#### Cannon Hill.

I recommend the trimming of some of the trees on Cannon Hill to open up a vista of the main lake, the removal of some of the young trees that have grown badly and raggedly, and the general layout of the top of the hill with grass and seats as a point of vantage from which to view the park.

#### Fillis Street Gully.

I recommend the clearing of rubbish from around the trees in this five acre gully, maintaining the area as a picnic spot of mown grass and trees, and the provision of a suitable entrance from Fillis Street. To my mind it is an ideal resort from the westerly and

*Consement*



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southerly winds, and in the form I suggest would require a minimum of development work and maintenance.

#### Fernery and Begonia House.

I recommend the continuance of the fernery and begonia house as at present, and would certainly not advocate dispensing with the begonia display, which in its setting of ferns attracts ten times more people than go to see the ferns alone. It is the same old story of the people loving colour.

Nevertheless I think the fernery could be conducted more economically than at present, and perhaps could be closed altogether in the winter months, as the orchids have not the same attraction as the begonias.

#### East of the Main Lake.

The problem of the hill to the east of the main lake is a replica of that on the west side of the lake except that (1) the pinus trees on the east side will probably live longer than those on the west and (2) the rare easterly wind is not as destructive as the frequent westerly. The fact remains that replanting of the east side must be provided for in the not distant future.

#### Bush Walk.

It is probably not generally realised that of the 123 acres in the combined Pukekura Park-Brooklands-Maranui-Highlands area not more than 20 acres is seen by the majority of people, and a large acreage is never visited except for a few boys who have left their mark in chopped trees and damaged ferns.

Throughout the valley to the southern exit on Upjohn Street, another exit on to Avenue Road near Upjohn Street and a third exit on to Avenue Road through List Street is beautiful native bush of considerable variety, including some large specimen trees.

I suggest that at comparatively little expense the existing path which traverses part of the distance on the racecourse side of the Brooklands lakes could be extended to the terminals already mentioned, making a mile walk from the main gates that would be a distinctive feature of the park. It would give ready access to the park to the people of Welbourne and south-west Vogeltown, and would perhaps be a deterrent against vandalism.

#### Accessibility and Information.

I mentioned earlier that only a small part of the park is visited by most people. One of the reasons is that many visitors to the main part of the park do not know of the charm of other parts of the park. The other is that people as a whole like to have their beauty spots very easily accessible, and will not bother to go far afield; nor do many of them like anything approaching a steep climb.

To overcome the lack of information I suggest:- (1) That a coloured brochure be issued containing say a dozen views of the park and letterpress describing the features, to be available for sale at bookshops and the park tea kiosk. It would serve also as an attractive souvenir; (2) That general information relative to what to see and how to get to it be displayed in artistic a form as possible in the region of the tea kiosk; (3) That plain direction signs be erected in appropriate places, showing the way to the various features.

To give more ready access to the least known part of the park, and to create a scenic drive of particular charm, a suggestion has been made that sometime in the future a bitumen roadway be constructed from the south entrance on Upjohn Street down the Highlands and Maranui Valley, emerging from the bush at the top end of Brooklands lake, winding round the south bank of Brooklands lake and bearing round the hill past the new rhododendron grove to run out on to the street near the junction of Brooklands Road and the road leading up to Brooklands.



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This would certainly make a very attractive drive, and would follow precedents set in many parts of New Zealand (such as Palmerston North) and other countries. However it would entail felling some of the bush in the valley, and for that reason might find strong objection.

An alternative would be to construct only that part of the proposed drive from Brooklands Road in as far as the bush at the top end of Brooklands Lake, and terminate it there, where there is plenty of open space for parking and picnicking, and immediate access to the bush walks.

I mention these proposals not as recommendations but as something for members of the committee to consider when next they visit the park.

Yours faithfully,

D.F.C. SAXTON,  
Chairman,  
Pukekura Park Committee.