

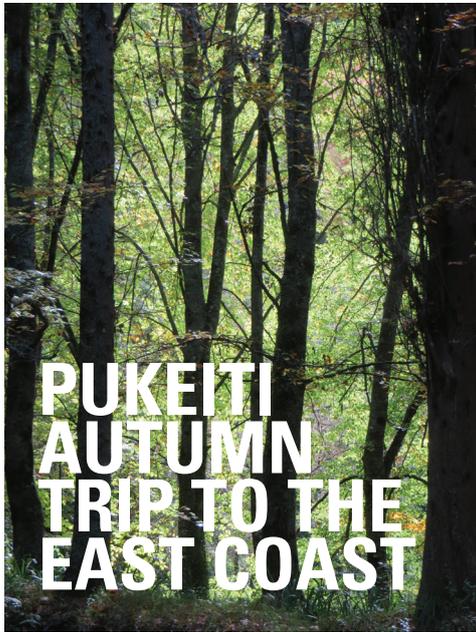


# Pukeiti NEWSLETTER

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.



[www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz)



**T**wenty-one Pukeiti members, led by Heather Robson, Chair of the Members' Committee, departed New Plymouth in the early morning sun at 7am on a beautiful autumn morning of May 02. The sun shone for the whole trip on the East Coast - it only clouded up on the way home.

In Gisborne, it seemed fitting, on looking out the window of the bus, to see the white cliffs leading to Young Nick's Head. This was the first land sighted on Cook's initial voyage of discovery, the place which marked the beginning of the endeavours and innovation by many since who have made New Zealand the great place it is.

We had just left Eastwoodhill, the living memorial to Douglas Cook, by the way born in New Plymouth in 1885, who with passion and single-mindedness developed and built the Arboretum of European Trees, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, on the dry hills of Gisborne. It was so dry that rhododendrons would not thrive. He then collected around him plants-people of note, the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust was established and he purchased the first parcel of land on which Pukeiti's gardens were established. Douglas, along with others like Sir Russell Matthews, wove a dream which still ensnares people as it has become reality. Pukeiti is more than just a collection of rhododendrons in a rainforest setting - it is unique. Unlike Eastwoodhill, introduced trees are few in number, selected for their bloom simply to provide a focus for

vistas, framed by the forest [conserved and regenerated] of the outstanding display of rhododendrons.

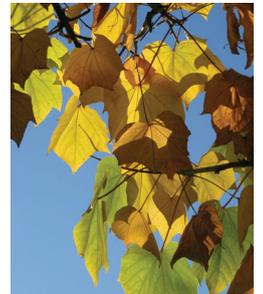
At Eastwoodhill the 3500 different species of tree were in autumn's colourful garb, perhaps not as bright as other years for the summer had been less dry and frosty mornings had not arrived - but still amazing. The highlight was the sound of the groups' feet crunching through the carpet of fallen leaves often made more brightly coloured by the shafts of light filtering through the now tall trees - the bones of the Arboretum. The tallest is a group of gum-trees (*Eucalyptus regans*) 60 meters in height, which are among the tallest trees in the world. From a distance their rounded feathery crowns contrasted with the pointed and solid evergreen conifers - redwoods, oregons, cedars, spruce and cypress, laced with colourful splashes of red, orange, yellow and antique coral and browns of poplars, ginkgo, liquid ambers and scarlet oaks, among many others.

At their feet, poking through the carpet of leaves, here and there, were the pink flowers of the ivy-leaved *Cyclamen hederifolium* obviously thriving, and in the Homestead Garden, borders of the white nerine.

A drive around the 135 hectare property on the jeep and trailer for some of the group, and a walk guided by the present curator, Dan Halliday, for the majority, were memorable ways to spend the morning, for the place touched the soul. We visited 'Eastwoodhill's Fibonacci Spiral', a memorial to H B [Bill] Williams, who purchased the property from Douglas two years prior to the latter's death. He was determined that Eastwoodhill should survive and so set up a Trust to ensure this. His action certainly emphasises that the future of such special places requires the on-going support of others equally passionate.

Douglas Cook planted trees on the property in 1918, and started the Arboretum formally in 1927. He died in 1967. Now nearly a hundred years after those first plantings, and input

from many, it is certainly worthy of the title 'An Arboretum of Distinguished Merit' given by the International Dendrology Society in 1978, and being recognised by the



*Firmania simplex* at Gwavas

NZ Garden Trust as a Garden of National Significance in 2007. The planting still continues. In a special commemorative ceremony recently representatives of the IDS planted a Wollemi Pine to mark the 100th birthday of Bob Berry, who was the first to catalogue the vast collection at Eastwoodhill. Bob of course established Hackfalls Arboretum and along with Lady Anne who developed the house garden on the property, recently formed a Trust to maintain that garden in the future. Both now live in Gisborne and are highly respected members of the IDS. Bob Berry was awarded a Veitch Memorial Medal for his contribution to horticulture by the Royal Horticultural Society in 2015.

The tour group had visited Hackfalls on the previous day after driving from Napier. The deeply dissected hill country through which



*Cyclamen hederifolium*



The group at Hackfalls

we passed was unusually green, lush with grass, the result of a relatively wet late summer and autumn and was made more appealing by the bright sunshine which accentuated shadows in the gullies, contours and sheep tracks. In places though - too many places in the view of some - sombre blankets of dark green pines capped and covered a number of the hills.

A walk through Hackfalls, which is at a higher altitude and a good deal wetter than Eastwoodhill, was exhilarating. We were guided by Diane Playle. Diane and her husband Kevin manage the farm and take care of the Arboretum, the highlight of which was the oak collection, particularly the Mexican Oaks, which make up probably the largest collection of these to be seen anywhere. Unusual trees, some not encountered before by some of our group, were spectacular in their autumn clothing. The resulting views especially around the lake were serene, bird-song of Tui and grey-warblers adding another dimension. In the distance sheep dotted green hills.

While oaks are the dominant trees planted there are many other species. A recent published book compiled by Bob Berry contains the full catalogue of these, along with their photographs. It sums up his life-long interest and obsession with trees. He started planting at Hackfalls in 1924. There are now over 3000 species and varieties, many of which Bob grew from seed he collected in the wild, spread across fifty acres of the farm. Among them are 160 different maples, 90 birches, 90 eucalypt species, 70 magnolia varieties, 450 oaks and over 400 rhododendrons.

It was the rhododendrons which captured the eye though, despite their not being in flower. They were also the main under-planting in the Gwavas forest we visited on the first day of the tour.

Gwavas, established by Major George Gwavas Carlyon was purchased in 1880 when the first gardens were laid out and the first houses built. Then a huge station of over 30,000 acres it took almost a 'village' of workers to farm it. Some of the trees planted in those early years are still present, grand and majestic in their old age, particularly the pines and macrocarpas. These now tower over and are joined by an array of other species, some of equal height, planted over the years as the farm management passed through the following generations. In 1950 Michael Hudson took over and since has restored and extended the plantings considerably. Some of the specimens he has propagated and many of the recent introductions have been grown from seed collected by his son, Tom Hudson, on a

number of expeditions in Asia. Tom now runs the family's Cornish property Tregrehan, in Cornwall.

The resulting garden at Gwavas is a true woodland garden, as natural as the climate and local conditions allow. It is described as a 'Cornish Woodland Garden' but is really a unique place, a New Zealand Woodland Garden of exotic plants moulded by the local external climate and the microclimate under the large canopy trees. This allows a successful eclectic range of plants to seemingly thrive, although this has required much care and attention from Michael and Carola who have battled with drought, having to extensively water the trees when young, and cleaned up after storms which have sent some of the larger trees crashing through sometimes rare and



Michael Hudson with *Magnolia (Michelia) doltsopa*

treasured under-plantings to the floor where many perennials like aquilegias, primulas, bluebells and daffodils add interest to the unspoilt woodland setting.

Now run separately from the surrounding farmland, which has been sold, Gwavas, the garden, encompasses nine hectares of planting and an adjoining remnant of virgin Hawkes Bay lowland forest. At the centre is the homestead built in 1890, now a category A Historic Building because of its Totara panelling, in which Phyllida (fifth generation at Gwavas - daughter of Michael and Carola) and husband Stuart run a business hosting guests and receptions and look after the gardens (under Michael's watchful eye).

After a great lunch and tour of the house the Pukeiti group were guided through the gardens by Stuart and joined by Michael.

Michael is a foundation member of Pukeiti. He joined up after a visit from Douglas Cook in 1951. Douglas called to outline his vision for Pukeiti and while not asking

Michael directly to join as a foundation member he offered as bait - a foot-high potted rare *Michelia doltsopa*, one of the first available in New Zealand. Michael took the bait and has been a keen supporter and benefactor of Pukeiti ever since. He proudly showed us the tree, patting its almost metre-diameter trunk with some affection. He also introduced us to a number of trees which Tom had collected.

Graham Smith and Allan Jellyman are presently assisting Michael to catalogue the extensive collections. Gwavas is a treasure trove of rare and unusual plants. The garden has one of the largest private collections of temperate woody plants in Australasia and like Hackfalls has been recognised by a 'Distinguished Merit Award' given by the IDS, and also made a 'Garden of National Significance' by the NZ Gardens' Trust. Gordon Collier wrote in an edition of 'NZ House and Garden' magazine, 'it's a natural woodland setting and looks cared for but not managed.'

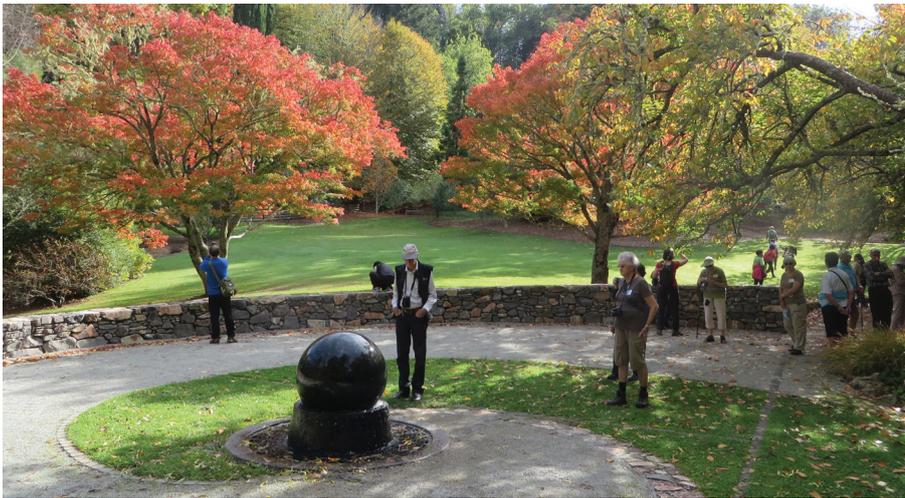
As Lynn started this story in Gisborne so I will continue from there. After dropping Lynn off at Gisborne airport, the rest of us continued travelling back to Napier for our second night.

Thursday saw us up bright and early to return to New Plymouth via Taupo. After morning tea down by the Taupo marina we proceeded to Huka Lodge. As soon as you turn off the road, the perfectly clipped hedges, lining the drive, inform that you are entering a different world. We were divided into two groups and proudly shown around by two of the gardeners. Along the entrance, and around the Lodge the planting is very formal with clipped blocks of Box and Choisya, neatly clipped edges of Box and the tall clipped hedges surrounding well maintained areas or rooms where guests can relax, swim, play tennis, petanque or croquet and eat.

The formality of the immaculately clipped areas quickly gives way to the more relaxed, but still carefully nurtured and maintained, plantings further from the Lodge to give an overriding sense of peace and tranquility.

In front of the lodge the perfectly manicured lawn sweeps down to the Waikato river in one direction and in the other to a magnificent water garden designed by Suzanne Turley. Here a man made river flows through large boulders and small waterfalls; drifts of moisture-loving plants such as gunnera, bog primulas and hostas thrive.

The rooms, perfectly secluded from the paths other guests use, are set among native bush gardens where exotics have been planted unintrusively with the natives. The



The group examine Eastwoodhill's Fibonacci Spiral

paths connecting the rooms with the garden and Lodge are also fringed with this style of planting. At the time of our visit, the lodge was fully booked so we were not able to be shown into one of the rooms.

The Lodge owners are Dutch and in spring 1500 tulips bloom around the lodge and gardens whilst daffodils are planted round a specimen tree in the lawn going down to the river and along the river bank. Apart from these spring bulbs the colour scheme of the garden is blue, white and red in keeping with the Flag of the Netherlands.

Throughout the 17 acres of garden, tables and chairs, garden benches and deeply cushioned chairs (complete with throws) are positioned strategically so guests can relax and enjoy the garden and river views. One or two members sampled the comfort of these chairs and approved of the standard set as did those others who

ventured into the wine cellar.

A couple of points to note is that even with the care and attention these gardens receive, they still are having problems with Box blight. The gunnera is not allowed to set seed heads and several times a year inspections are carried out, without notice, to ensure they are compliant with this requirement.

After Huka Lodge we proceeded around to our Patron's home for our lunch.. Gordon's garden, as anyone who knows him would imagine, is quite small (especially compared to Titoki Point) but beautifully landscaped and it was a delightful place for us to have our last lunch together. Gordon, is soon to release a book - a memoir entitled 'Bells Junction - Where is that?'

As we left Taupo, the drizzle started and it was a quiet busload of weary but happy travellers that returned to New Plymouth.

*Lynn Bublitz & Heather Robson*



Allan Jellyman inspects *Magnolia dealbata*



Jenny Johannsen, Heather Robson and Orel McIntyre under a red leaved cornus

## Happenings at Pukeiti

Work at Pukeiti is continuing at pace and what looks presently like a bomb-site will gradually be transformed. Intensive building activity will recommence and areas will again look as if another bombing raid has occurred.

The Vireya House (which replaces the old Covered Walk) has been completed and an extensive watering system has been installed. Andrew, working closely with members of the Garden Forum, particularly Greg Rine, Graham Smith and Allan Jellyman, has the planting plans well in hand and placing of the plants in the house is soon to begin. The House offers a range of microclimates to mimic the conditions occurring in the geographical and ecological range from which species in the vireya collection

have been sourced. These specimens will be complemented by many fine vireya hybrids, along with appropriate companion plants. The new House, with its elevated walkway and access through the bush to an elevated view of the waterwheel, will provide a covered all-weather attraction at Pukeiti.

Excavation work on the Misty Knoll, its spiral pathway and tunnel which leads to the secret crater-like bowl has been completed and planting is soon to be undertaken. Red and pink azaleas will cover the slopes on each side of the pathway and the bowl will feature scented rhododendrons, mainly *Maddenia* varieties. Grassing of the Knoll has been completed and soon the new Founders' Garden will also be grassed.

The mid-winter dinner will be the last function in the Gatehouse. Tenders are being called for the upgrading of this, the entrance to Pukeiti, which will be called the

Rainforest Pavilion. An extended deck will be connected to the upper level of the Vireya House. Work is expected to begin in July and take up to six months to complete. Meanwhile a partnership group representing the TRC and the Trust is working on a design brief for architects to use as a basis for the drawing of plans for the new Lodge. It is hoped that it will be built in the 2017/18 financial year. The old Lodge will be demolished soon.



*R. apoanum x* waiting to be transplanted into the new Vireya House

# Members' Activities

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Your members' committee needs more assistance in staging our organised events such as: Plant packing • Setting up for events and cleaning up afterwards • Transport of older members to events • Maintenance of the members' database • Working Bees and other activities. The committee meets 4 times a year. If you think you can help out or become a committee member, please contact Heather (06 757 2460), Diane (06 7522800).

## WORKING BEES

- WEDNESDAY, MAY 25
- WEDNESDAY, JULY 27
- SATURDAY, AUGUST 27
- WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
- WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23
- SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10



## PROPAGATION WORKSHOP

WEDNESDAY, JULY 27 - 9:30AM

Meet in Propagation area. Propagating perennial plants.

### MEMBERS' COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Tuesday, September 06 - 9:30  
Tuesday, November 15 - 9:30

### BOARD MEETINGS

Friday, June 24 - 6pm at Govett Quilliam Offices  
Friday, September 23 - 6pm at Govett Quilliam Offices

### SPRING MEMBERS' DAY & AGM

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

### SATURDAY, JUNE 25

#### MID DAY WINTER DINNER

A tasty three course, buffet style dinner will be served at the Gatehouse. Please arrive by 11:45 for mulled wine and social time. Dinner will be served at 12:30. After dinner Gordon Bailey will entertain us with an account of his plant collecting trip to S.E. China. Bring some loose change for the raffles. RSVP with payment and special dietary requests to Diane Jordan, Secretary, PO Box 1066, New Plymouth by Wednesday, June 22.

Cost \$32.50pp

BYO



**Pukeiti**

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.



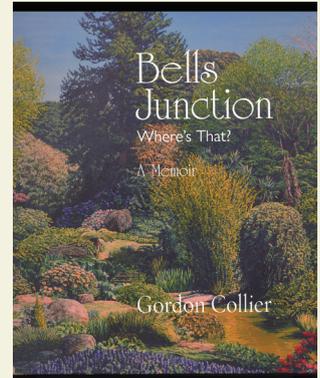
Taranaki Regional Council

[www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz) is worth a look!

### The Memoirs of our Patron - Gordon Collier

Gordon has written a book of memoirs which will appeal to many of our members.

Mainly designed for his grandchildren, the book includes several chapters of tales which will be of special interest to all. These are the chapters on his experiences at New Plymouth Boys' High School, Tupare, Titoki Point and Pukeiti. The final Chapter on his retirement to and the development of his Taupo property, Anacapri, is the only chapter that concentrates mainly on plants.



The book is wonderfully illustrated and will be available by private sale later this year for \$45 + P&P

Once the book is available for purchase, we will advise on methods of purchase through Pukeiti.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16

A selection of members' gardens which are not normally part of the festival will be open for members to visit. *Details in next newsletter*

## POWERCO TARANAKI Garden SPECTACULAR

New Zealand's Premier Spring Festival

TARANAKI 28 Oct - 6 Nov 2016



### FRIDAY, OCT 28 - SUNDAY, NOV 06

Volunteers needed for parking & meet and greet.

### MID- LATE NOVEMBER

Proposed Members' trip to the Auckland area gardens. Details to follow.

## END OF YEAR BBQ SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10

Please book with Secretary on 06 7522800 by Thursday, December 08

Postal address:	PO Box 1066 New Plymouth 4340
Location:	2290 Carrington Rd. RD4
Secretary Diane Jordan	Phone 06 7522800 joridy@primowireless.co.nz
Chairperson Gordon Bailey	Gordon.Bailey@waic.govt.nz

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL		www.trc.govt.nz
Office hours	Mon-Fri 8am - 5pm	Environmental hotline 0800 736 222
Postal address	Private Bag 713, Stratford 4352	Regional gardens regional.gardens@trc.govt.nz
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