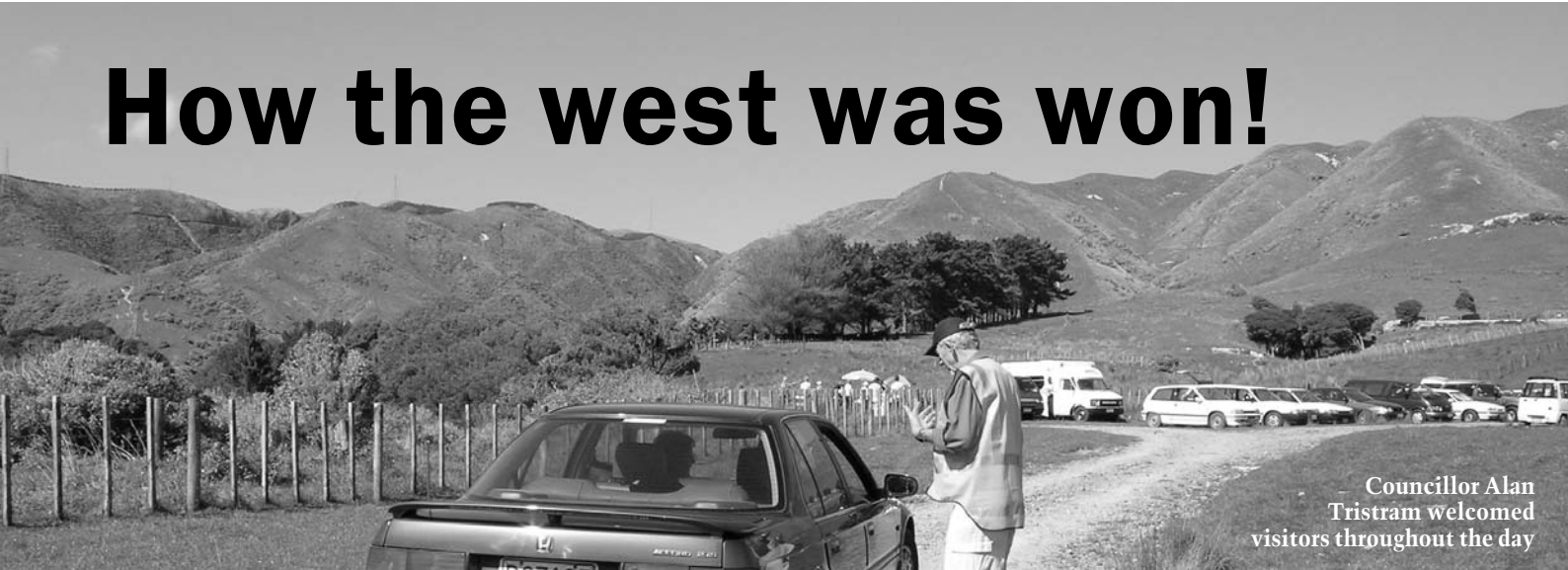


How the west was won!



Councillor Alan Tristram welcomed visitors throughout the day

In June 2004 the Friends committee first became aware of rumours that Landcorp wanted to sell the Whareroa farm and were inviting developers to submit plans for sub-division. Temperatures mounted over the next few months as we realised that an essential recreational space for Wellington and the Kapiti coast could be lost. Old records were dusted off and memories revived and we discovered that the old Department of Lands and Survey had invested large sums developing the recreational use of Whareroa as a farm park in the 80 's, as an extension of the recreational development of Queen Elizabeth Park. The facilities were widely used by the community with activities such as tramping, adventure camps, farm visits, bush walks and orienteering being very popular.

All this was lost when Lands and Survey was disestablished in the gov-

ernment reforms of the late 80 's, and Whareroa became part of the commercial farming operations of the new State Owned Enterprise Landcorp. By November the committee was generating media interest and writing letters to relevant Ministers, Landcorp, Local MP 's, KCDC, the Regional Council and other interested groups through the good work of Joe Clarkson and Patricia Norton. Successful Ministers of SOE's Mark Burton and Paul Swain replied that the sale was an operational matter which they could not intervene in. The pace hotted up in the New Year with the realisation that there were a wide range of community groups opposed to the sale and these, together with local iwi, joined together to form the Guardians of Whareroa with Jenny Rowan from Paekakariki as convener.

Many meetings were held with the key Ministers ably facilitated by Winnie Laban MP for Mana. The Conservation Minister Chris Carter and Rod Donald of the

There was a picnic on Whareroa farm on the 11th of September to celebrate the success of the campaign to keep the farm in public ownership. More than 400 people enjoyed a sun drenched day of music, walking, horse riding and mountain biking



Greens visited the farm and expressed their support. But real progress was slow and a complete impasse was reached in July when it was suggested that the community should raise the \$4-6 million required to buy the farm. The Guardians felt it was ludicrous to ask the community to pay a developers price for an asset which had been expropriated from the community in the first place. However, manna from heaven in the form of an election was at hand.

There was confusion over the National party policy on asset sales, although they did eventually concede that they would sell a few farms. This provided the government with an opportunity to differentiate itself from the opposition and on 19 August they announced they would buy Whareroa for \$4.5 million, and permanently protect it as a park for the people of Wellington. Now the real work begins on how the community realises the potential of this fantastic piece of land. All suggestions welcome.

Watch this space!

John Lancashire



View from the chair

The view from the Chair this month is very definitely rainbow coloured. This is because of that amazing day, 19 August, when the Conservation Minister Chris Carter announced that the Labour-Progressive government would purchase the Whareroa farm (446 ha) for \$4.5 million. The Minister said that "Whareroa has high landscape and recreational values, and it has conservation potential as a corridor from Kapiti Island through to Queen Elizabeth Park and the Akatarawa and Tararua ranges. All these values are dependent upon the retention of public access to the farm". We can certainly relate to that! As a member of the Friends you can take some credit for this great result through our involvement

with the Guardians of Whareroa, who led the charge to keep the farm in public ownership. See page 4, "How the west was won!"

We can now re-establish the close links that used to exist between QE Park and Whareroa and develop a far better recreational facility for the community. The cabinet has signed off on the deal and the role of the Regional Council will be determined at their next meeting in October. Once that occurs there will be a lot of work to do. The Guardians are determined to play a key role in the recreational development of Whareroa and this has been supported by the Chairman of the Regional Council Ian Buchanan. Meanwhile enjoy the victory.

John Lancashire
Chairman, Friends of QEP



Kapiti coasters reclaiming Whareroa farm; Page 4

PARK ACTIVITIES

REGIONAL OUTDOOR PROGRAMME

Greater Wellington's Regional Outdoor Programme will be finalised by mid December. To find out what's happening in Queen Elizabeth Park this year, check out the **Get Involved Section** of the GWRC website; <http://www.govt.nz>

MODEL AEROPLANES

Fly near Whareroa pa on most calm days

KAPITI COAST ELECTRIC TRAMWAY

● The tram ride is across Queen Elizabeth Park between MacKay's Crossing and Whareroa Beach. The trip of about 2km takes about ten minutes each way, leaving on the hour and half hour

● The display is located in the tram barn. An old Wellington cable-car and other trams may be viewed along with an interesting selection of historical photographs and memorabilia

● Tickets are available in the Museum shop where souvenirs, drinks and confectionary may also be purchased

Adults	\$4 return,	\$2.50 single
Children	\$2.50 return,	\$1.50 single
Family concession	\$10	
Under fives		free

Open 11am – 4.30pm Weekends @ Public Holidays, and Daily from 26th December to late January ☎ 04 292 8316
www.wellingtontramwaymuseum.fr.fm

WORKING BEES

The Regional Council welcomes volunteers for planting and weed control activities:

To book your own event, contact **Park Ranger** Nikki LaMonica ☎ 04 292 8625 or on her mobile 027 244 5319



Leon Kiel, Jenny Rowan and John Lancashire, point the way



The path through the remnant bush

Precious places

Environmental activists have campaigned for years for the protection and restoration of Queen Elizabeth Park's coastal forest remnant and wetland areas

In 1985 I was appointed as one of three government representatives to the Queen Elizabeth Park Board. I soon became aware of the lack of protection for the natural areas of the Park. As this is a regional park there were councillors from each contributing council, accompanied by their parks and reserves managers, on the Board. In spite of this representation there was very little interest in either the forest, which is a remnant of the original forest that covered most of the coastal plain, and contains some good specimen trees, or of the wetland areas.

The park was serviced by the Kapiti Coast District Council, and the parks manager was quite unsympathetic to protecting or enhancing these areas. The forest remnant, badly fenced, was grazed periodically, with the wetlands also being used by large cattle beasts which pugged the ground and

destroyed any growth of native plants. Nothing was done towards weed control or revegetation. Motocross was allowed through parts of the wetland and sand dunes, and horse events were allowed through the bush.

In 1991 Wellington Regional Council took over the administration of the Park. Although they had more empathy—and more finance—it was some years before any real progress was made. Of more recent years, WRC have appointed their own rangers with enthusiasm for the job. We have been pleased to work in turn with Gareth, Nola and Chris, very active advocates and workers with vision for the Park, all of whom reinforced our commitment to continue the work.

Kapiti Environmental Action was formed in 1990. We started a planting programme for the remnant with Kapiti Forest and Bird, plants supplied

through WRC, and also worked with a Conservation Corp group. After planting we had to return to release the plants from rampant weeds and blackberry. It was difficult to convince WRC that the blackberry should be removed but was a job far beyond the capabilities of a small community group. Eventually, after much lobbying, WRC found the funds and the eradication was undertaken.

As K.E.A.'s workload has increased in other avenues we have not been able to help so regularly with planting, potting, or releasing, but the rangers have completed the planting of the remnant with very satisfying results. It is a real pleasure to walk through, see things growing unaffected by cows or horses, especially now we have a well formed track which prevents falling into the foxholes left by the U.S. Army (true!), and saves the plants from trampling.

Apart from fencing to keep out stock, the wetlands areas were largely neglected. It was a thrill to us when the ponds near McKays Road were landscaped and well planted, far beyond anything we had hoped for. Compensation funds from Transit have allowed similar work to be done nearer the railway line with pleasing results. This completes the enhancement of these precious places which will give much enjoyment to the public for years to come.

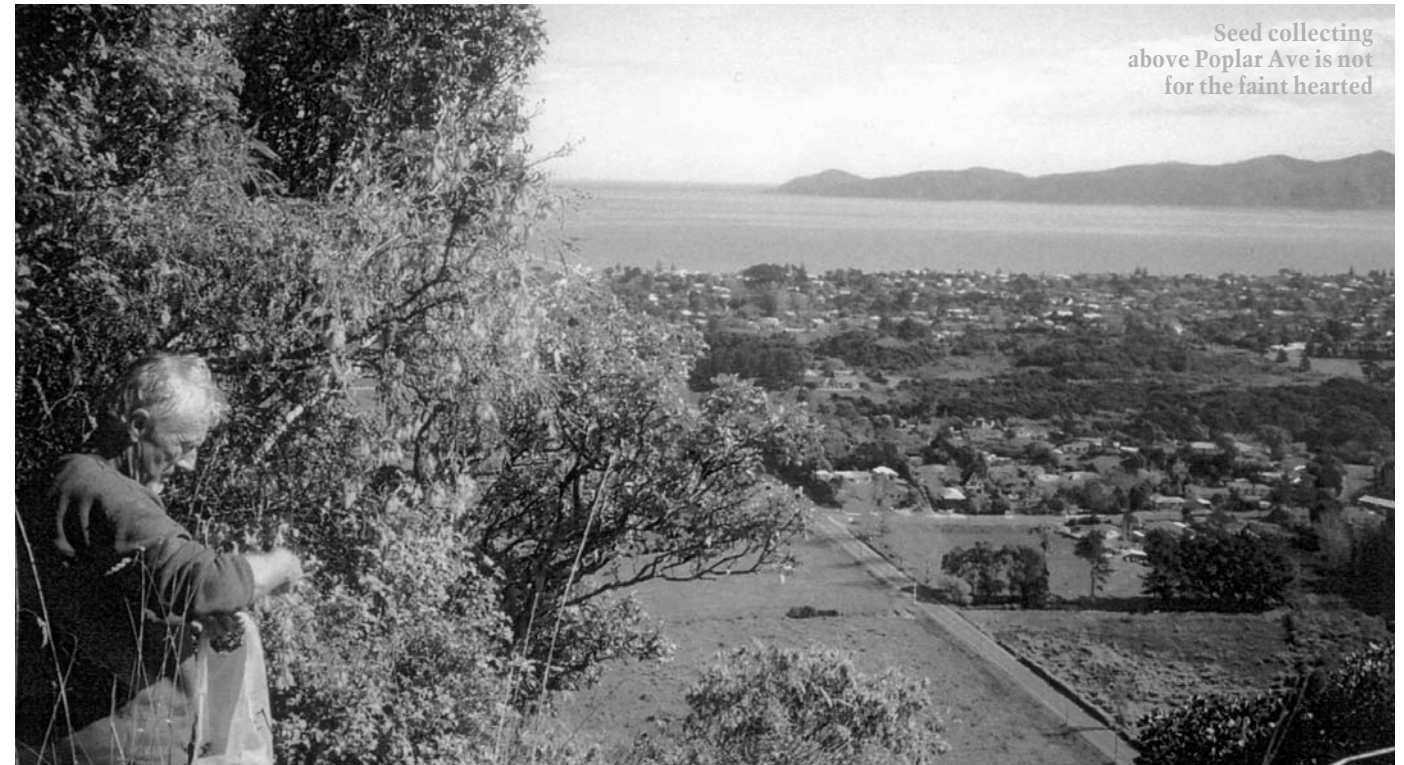
Thank you Greater Wellington Regional Council.

June Rowland

TALES OF THE PARK

- How has Queen Elizabeth Park changed over the years?
 - What does the Park mean to you?
 - What do you want it to become?
- The Friends of QEP want to tell your stories. With your help, the history of the park and our relationship with it will be told in this newsletter

email your park stories to;
joeclarkson@paradise.net.nz



Seed collecting above Poplar Ave is not for the faint hearted

Go Kowhai!

According to J.T.Salmon the author of the classic book "The Native Trees of New Zealand" the kowhai is undoubtedly the most beautiful New Zealand tree. Not surprisingly it is also our national flower. We all have our own ideas of beauty, but certainly there have been some wonderful specimens of kowhai flowering on the Kapiti coast in the past few weeks. Many are in private gardens and fortunately for motorists and pedestrians they are often planted at the front of the section. But they are in public places too, with a great tree still flowering (24 September) behind the Blockbuster video store in Papaparau. Other good examples have been seen outside the ANZ bank at Coastlands and new plantings of young trees outside the new police station. No doubt you all have your favourite.

They are also a very important food source for native birds and if we have more of these trees we will also have more tuis, bellbirds and kereru in our gardens and parks. Those are the rea-

sons why your committee recently ticked off on a long term project to establish up to a million kowhai trees on the Kapiti coast in the next 20 - 30 years. We will be planting many of these as part of the restoration of the Whareroa stream in Queen Elizabeth Park as some species of kowhai do grow well near rivers and streams. Hopefully we will also plant them on the newly acquired Whareroa farm which forms the catchment area for the Park.

At this stage we are raising trees from a few big old specimens on the escarpment above SH1. Seeds and seedlings collected from one tree growing above Paekakariki are already being raised at the Nga Uruora nursery at Paekakariki school, at the Regional council nursery in the Park and by private individuals such as Hamish Carson a student at Paraparau College. So we are underway with several hundred trees already 25 cm tall. Recently Braden Rowson, the KCDC bio diversity officer, and I collected a pile of seed off a wonderful small group of trees

growing at the top of the escarpment above the SH1/ Poplar Avenue intersection. So if you are interested in contributing to the "million" target please contact Joe Clarkson or myself and we will supply you with a few seeds and advice on how to raise them. We can't supply soil, seed boxes or shed space but volunteers are always welcome at the above nurseries.

We are also running a competition to name this project. We have a few ideas of our own and we cannot guarantee that the winner will necessarily be the final choice. The prize is not surprisingly a 2m tall kowhai tree close to flowering (valued at \$50 - 60 retail). Get your entries into Joe Clarkson or me by Christmas and the committee will make a decision in the New Year.

Finally the NZ Plant Conservation Network is running an election for New Zealanders favourite native plant. After the first 24 hours the kowhai is in front but there is along way to go as voting continues until November 30. To vote go to www.nzpcn.org.nz.

John Lancashire

Contacts: lancs@paradise.net.nz or joeclarkson@paradise.net.nz