

ARBOR DAY PLANTINGS AND OTHER TREES

We know some of the plantings of significant trees at the front of the School.

The first image shows Norman Pollard standing beside a kauri tree (*Agathis australis*), that he planted, as a boy, on Arbor Day, 1932. The photograph was taken in 2003.



The tree came from his father's plantation. Norman was the last member of the Pollard family to be in charge of the whole operation of Henderson and Pollard, joiners and timber-merchants. They began in business in 1904. It was the Pollards who really ran the business; a huge premises in Enfield Street, Mt Eden. The factory was rebuilt twice after major fires in 1909 and 1927.

The following image was photographed by Whites Aviation in 1965.



The firm was purchased by Carter Holt Harvey in 1987 and operated from the Mt Eden site for several years. It has been redeveloped into high density housing.



The following image is of the Kauri as it was in 2018.



Mr Pollard said that two boys from his class planted two other trees. One was a nearby *Libocedrus bidwillii*. The tree is, to some extent, crowded out by a large pohutukawa (*Meterosideros excelsa*.) The cedar has had some of its lower branches cut off, but its characteristic grey and red bark are readily seen.



The following image is of its foliage, from Wikipedia.



The second tree is an enormous rimu (*Drachyam cupressinum*).





Another significant tree in this bosky grove was mentioned in *The Albertian* of 1933, page 10.

“In introducing Colonel Stilwell, Mayor of Mt. Albert, and Mrs Stilwell to the School assembled in the grounds, Mr Gamble mentioned the fact that we have no less than forty-seven varieties of native trees. Our visitors planted two puriri trees ... “[*Vitex lucens*].

The trees were planted close together, one has grown to maturity and the other is now a surviving stump.

We do not yet have provenance for other major trees in this area, several pohutukawas, the tall Norfolk pine, *Auricularia heterophylla*, several totaras including the large one at the front. The cordylines are self-sown by birds.

The provenance of another totara tree (*Podocarpus totara*) is known. It is growing near the driveway close to the caretaker’s house. It was planted on Arbor Day 1940 (which was then celebrated on 4 August). A group of be-gowned masters and the assembled School were present.



The men present were, on the viewer’s left, Harvey and Towers, the planters were Coldham and Hardy and the group standing on the right were Brock, Perry, Gamble and Caradus.

Given the placement of the tree and its bifurcated stem, it is possible to locate it. Nearly 80 years on, it is a handsome tree.



A close-up of the trunk shows a distinct bifurcation.



The frontispiece of the 1933 *The Albertian* has this photograph of Mr Gatland in front of an arc of boys.



It is headed Arbor Day 1933. The photograph was taken by A Breckon Jr who became a war-time pilot who took aerial photographs. Just as there is no text to support the 1940(?) photograph there is also no text to support the 1933 photograph. There are a number of nearby puriri trees (*Vitex lucens*), all of an age to be planted in 1933 or thereabouts. Were there a number of Arbor Day plantings, all but two, unreported? All the men in the 1940 photograph were also on the staff in 1933. There are different species of other trees nearby, they could have been Arbor Day plantings too.

There are other notable trees for which the planting is unknown. The most prominent are the phoenix palms at the front of the School. There were originally four, but as they grew two were removed to allow the others to grow undisturbed. The Crown depicted has an epiphyte growing on it.



Epiphytes, both vascular plants and lichens can grow on lower levels, too.



The leaves of these palms are dangerous. The spikes puncture the skin, cause considerable irritation and do not show up on x-rays. The palms are native of the Canary Islands (*Phoenix canariensis*).

As Gamble said in 1933, we have forty-seven varieties of native trees. Some are still here, some have gone, and as well as endemic trees there are, or have been, many beautiful exotic trees. Some are shown below:









The School is a sort of arboretum. Some trees have been more recently planted. The Main Quadrangle was redesigned in 2010 and renamed the Albertians Quadrangle. *Coprosma sp.* were planted in raised planters. They are kept trimmed to conical shapes and are edged by box hedging. The image shows the trees ten years later in 2017.



The boxes are of a height so that they can serve as seats.

In October 2010 the Lions of 2006 planted a tree to commemorate their five years at School. It could not have been planted earlier as the Albertian Quad makeover was not finished earlier.



The plaque has the Emblem and the words:

The true meaning of life is
to plant a tree under which you
do not expect to sit
Lions of 2006
Explore.Dream.Discover.

Ten years on the tree is nearly big enough to sit under.



This image is from a different aspect, against the wall of the library.

In the E Block Quadrangle a number of *Magnolia grandiflora* were planted in 2011 in raised planters. Smaller *Coprosma sp* were also planted.



Other magnolias can be seen on the back of the truck of Quality Big Trees. In the intervening 10 years they have grown to quite big trees.



The distance between them is foreshortened by the 270 mm lens setting.

Just as in the Albertian Quad, these raised boxes also provide seating.

One of the magnolias was surrounded by flowers. It is a Memorial Tree for Sally Ann Ainsley, one of triplets who died of cancer. In the first image her mother and sisters are unveiling the plaque on 7 December 2011.



It had been covered with a folded School tablecloth. Fifth Headmaster Greg Taylor joins others at the service. The sixth, and then serving, Headmaster Dale Burden, knew Sally well and spoke movingly about her. The second image is of the plaque.



Another named tree, a puriri, was planted in 2019.



A plaque shows that it was planted to acknowledge the longevity of Brian Murphy.



The tree is planted in a small grove near the entrance to the student centre at the western end of the Maurice Hall Quadrangle. Because of building works, in that quad, planter boxes with a pohutukawa, *Metrosideros excelsa*, and silver birches, *Betula pendula*, were removed, along with the planter boxes. Their removal also helps with the movement of the growing roll.

There are a number of trees on the ASB Bank Mount Albert Grammar School Farm, including a large Oak, a swampy area has been planted in endemics, there are Fruit Trees in the Horticulture Block and a field is planted in Kiwi Fruit.

Roy Clements, a senior English teacher took on a mammoth task of creating the Meola Creek Walkway which is about a kilometre long. It started with boys using Roy's tools in late 1979. And with Roy's drive and energy it began to metastasise with more and more boys wanting to become workers "across the creek".



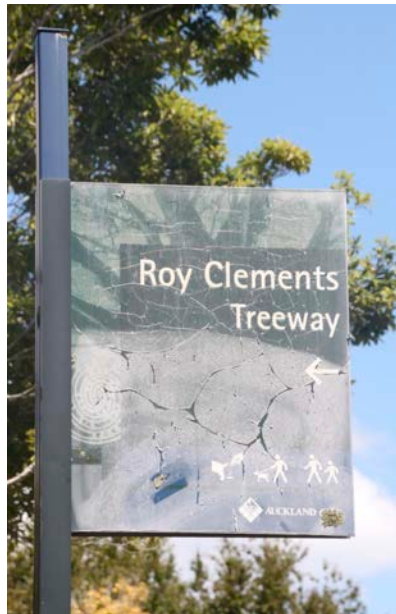
A number of local citizens became involved, hundreds of trees were donated, the Mt Albert Lions donated an industrial mower, the Justice Department provided workers on periodic detention. Local authorities became interested, a paved walkway was made.



Roy kept the wider School abreast of progress through *The Albertian* with *Meola Matters* or *Across the Creek* and *The Other Eden*. Roy is also an excellent photographer and has kept records of progress. Four of many images follow:



The first stage was open to the public in 1984. The Auckland City Council provided a good-quality concrete walkway. Bike riders can use it too. The Council erected a sign at the Alberton Avenue end. It indicates “The Roy Clements Treeway”; a forever reminder of the far-sightedness and tenacity of this remarkable man.



While trees serve their own interest as it were, each is an ecosystem supporting a myriad of creatures and the human family. Some trees, such as aspens produce rhizomes from which 'new' trees grow, so that a clump of aspens is really a clonal colony. Trees have a symbiotic relationship with fungi. Trees provide the fungi with sugars and the fungi provide the trees with minerals through the complex of the root hairs in individual trees.

Canadian scientist Suzanne Simard (2017) says that in a mixed forest there are Mother Trees that teach their own saplings. Laboratory tests with saplings and radioactive carbon 14 support this concept.

American science writer and synthesist Gabriel Popkin (2019) refers to the interconnectedness of all the trees in a forest as The Wood Wide Web.

The concept of Sentinel Trees was pioneered by French entomologist Alain Roques (2007). He and his team planted groves of North American and European trees in China and studied the insects that visited these trees. Some pests were identified and served as an early warning. The idea has taken off. Some results were reported in 2020.

Trees are used as shelter, for beautification of streets, parks and private property. Street trees also absorb pollution and baffle temperature fluctuations and slow water flow to storm-water drains. They are carbon sinks and are planted to prevent erosion.

The nectar of tree blossoms provide food for honeybees, other insects and birds. This leads to cross fertilization and the production of soft fruits and nuts; food for humans and many creatures. Seeds can be spread by various means.

Leaf fall provides food for invertebrates which are preyed on by birds. The decaying leaves form humus which nurtures the seedlings of the next generation of trees.

Many animals such as leaf miners and adult insects, amphibians, birds and mammals lead an arboreal life. Trees are used by animals of visible size as scaffolding and animals move from tree to tree as on an aerial highway.

Timber is used in construction and as fuel, either as wood or charcoal. In 2021, the English biologist Roland Ennos wrote: *The Wood Age: How one material shaped the whole of human history.*

Trees are the subject of song, story and poetry. The ideal of the Tree of Life and the World Tree are recurring motifs in many cultures. Individual trees may be named. Also, some species of trees are vested with power; oak, holly, hawthorne (May-tree), yew, rowan, sycamore, banyan. As is the ideal of the Wishing Tree; an individual tree that a people regard as sacred and which they festoon with votive offerings for good fortune.

During November, in some churches, a tree is erected so that parishioners can write the names of their family's dead on labels and attach those labels to the tree so that prayers may be said for them.

The following image is of such a tree in the Parish Church of Saints Peter and Paul, Portlaoise, Country Laois, Ireland.



The Christmas Tree originated in Germany. The earliest dated one was 1576. In pre-Christian times evergreen trees and wreaths and garlands were symbols of eternal life. The Green Man heralded the return of spring. Hans Christian Anderson wrote a story called *The Fir-Tree*.

Christmas trees became widespread in Europe and brightly lit ones appeared in churches. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were enthusiastic adopters of Christmas Trees and they soon spread around the English-speaking world. It became the universal Symbolic Tree, and there is no end to the ways in which it can be decorated.

Trees are planted to commemorate births, marriages, coronations, battles and fallen soldiers. Trees are planted in gratitude for aid by a friendly nation, especially in time of war, or aid by a group or an heroic individual. Trees are planted by visiting Royalty, Heads of State or representatives of international organisations. All these trees, planted for different reasons, usually have plaques to identify them.

Eve ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and Buddha found enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.

Brian Murphy