

ARBOR DAY PLANTINGS

We know some of the stories behind the planting 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 Road, Mt Eden. The factory was rebuilt twice after major fires in 1909 and 1927.

The following image was photographed by Whites Aviation in 1965.

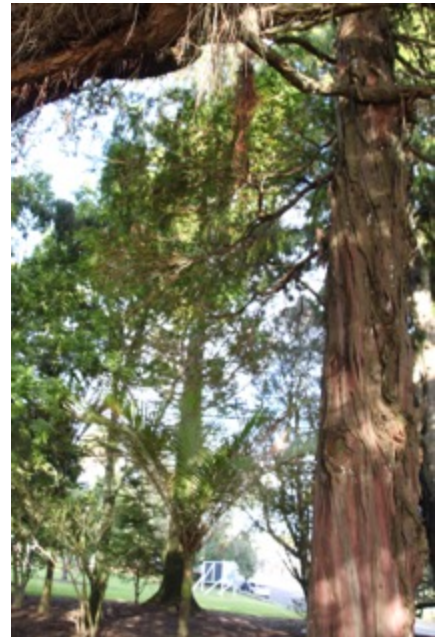


The firm was purchased by Carter Holt Harvey in 1987 and operated from the Mt Eden site for several years. It has been redeveloped into high density housing.

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 is readily seen.



The following image is of its foliage, from Wikipedia.



The second tree, at right, is an enormous rimu (*Drachyiam 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.



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.



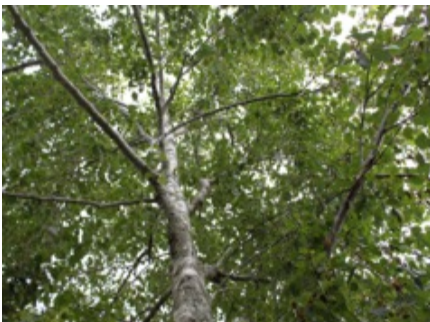
Epiphytes, both vascular plants and lichens can grow on lower levels, too.



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 47 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.

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. Most trees have their roots in a symbiotic relationship with fungi. Other plants and lichens grow as epiphytes on trees.

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

The nectar of tree blossoms provide food for honey bees, 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 a myriad of 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 firewood or charcoal.

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, yew, rowan, sycamore, banyan.

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