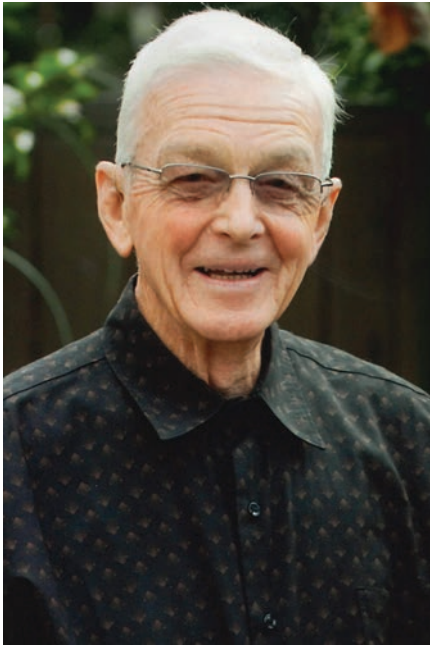


Obituaries

Philip ('Phil') Joseph Jew AHRIH, MBE 17 February 1929 – 10 November 2019



Phil Jew AHRIH, MBE.

On 10th November 2019, an icon of the parks community passed away. Philip ('Phil') Jew was one of the most influential figures in parks during a career that began as a horticultural apprentice at Auckland City Council in May 1946 and ended in 1994 when he retired as Manager Parks and Reserves for the Auckland Regional Council (ARC). He continued his interest in regional parks and botanic gardens until passing away aged ninety.

Phil transferred to Duncan & Davies Nurseries in New Plymouth in February 1949, returning to work for Auckland City Council in June 1950. After completing his apprenticeship Phil travelled to Britain in 1952 where he spent five years including time at Cambridge University and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. When at Kew he won the Matilda Smith Memorial Prize, the Dummer Memorial Prize and the Hooker Prize. He completed an English National Diploma of Horticulture before returning home in September 1956 to assume the role of Officer in Charge of Horticulture for Auckland City Council. He also completed the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (RNZIH) National Diploma in 1956.

In March 1966 Phil was appointed manager for parks and reserves for the recently established Auckland Regional Authority (ARA) and it was in this role that he made an indelible contribution to the establishment and development of Auckland's much-loved regional parks network. The ARA was establishing a system of rural and coastal parks and had recently taken over management of the Centennial Memorial Park in the Waitakere Ranges, and they had opened the first regional park, Wenderholm. By the time of his retirement, 11 regional parks had been opened with around five million annual visits. Today there are 27 regional parks attracting more than seven million visitors each year.

Phil set very high standards for regional parks, demanding high levels of presentation. He ensured that visits by politicians always coincided with high tides, and that the toilets and other facilities were spotless. Farming was used to manage much of the parkland, and Phil ensured only the best livestock were in view when politicians visited. Such attention to detail earned the respect and confidence of politicians, and he was a master of converting them to his point of view.

Phil had a special interest in botanic gardens, and it was no secret that his greatest ambition was to establish such an institution in Auckland. To achieve this, he enlisted the support of horticultural institutions such as the Auckland Horticultural Council, the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture, and the Auckland District Council. Sue Davison of Auckland recalls a working party from the former Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) setting off for a site at Manurewa to assess its suitability for a botanic garden. The working party of Ted Chamberlain, Jim Hunter and Joan Dingley reported back favourably on the Manurewa site.

Tom Pearce, father of Auckland local-body politician Sandra Coney, was chairman of the ARA during the time Phil was managing regional parks and endeavouring to start a botanic garden. Sandra recalls that Phil approached her father to recommend that the ARA fund a botanic garden at Manurewa. Despite Tom Pearce having absolutely no interest whatsoever in gardening, such was his confidence in Phil's judgement that he agreed to support his recommendation.

In May 1967, 42 hectares of farmland owned by the Nathan family was purchased in Manurewa for the purpose of developing a botanic garden. A further 22 hectares was added later.

In 1986 Phil travelled overseas to study the changing role of botanic gardens. The two significant trends he noted since his time at Kew were the increasing involvement of volunteers, and the establishment of support organisations such as trusts and foundations. The latter led to the formation of the Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens (the Friends) in February 1983. Under his guidance the constitution, purpose and structure of the Friends were established, and this thorough early work has resulted in an organisation that has consistently added great value to the Gardens. Phil had a clear view of what was important in a botanic garden, encapsulated in his favourite quote from his time at Kew: "Delightful scientific shade, for knowledge as for pleasure made".

Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens, now Auckland Botanic Gardens, opened to the public in 1982. When Phil retired, visitor numbers had reached 300,000 per annum, growing to 1.2 million today.

Phil was a member of the inaugural committee that established Eden Garden in 1964. This garden has since become a much-loved horticultural destination in the

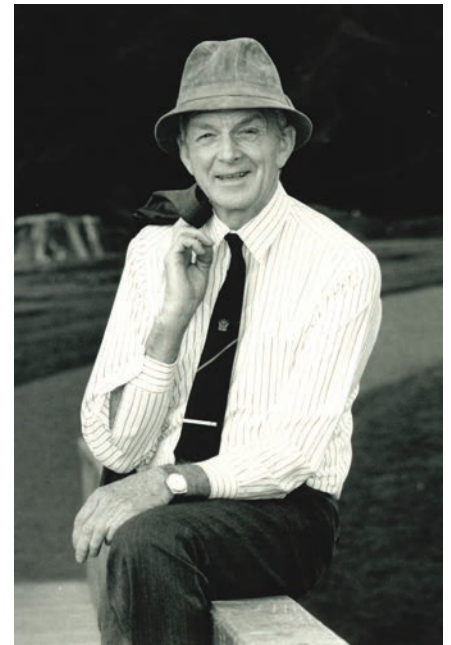
Auckland region. He also presented a popular gardening radio programme on 1YA from October 1966 until May 1971.

In 1983 Phil was made an Associate of Honour of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture; he was a member from December 1947, right up until his death in November 2019. In 1990 he was awarded the Ian Galloway Memorial Cup in recognition of his outstanding personal contribution to the wider parks industry. In the Queen's Birthday Honours of 1992 he was appointed MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for services to horticulture and conservation. In 1993 he was elected a Life Member of the Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens.

His legacy continues today in regional parks through the ranger service he helped establish, the policies and volunteer programmes he developed, and most importantly in the superb network of parks that contribute so much to our social and environmental well-being.

Without Phil's drive and influence Auckland Botanic Gardens may never have begun, let alone become one of Auckland's most visited cultural institutions. He was undoubtedly a man of steadfast determination who had the vision, skills and powers of persuasion to achieve great things for the people of Auckland.

**Obituary prepared by
Jack Hobbs**



Upper Lake, Auckland Botanic Gardens. Photo: Chester Nicholls.