

SPOOKY GULLY, WELLINGTONLynne Scott

In October I spent a weekend in Wellington and on Saturday 4th accompanied members of the Wellington Botanical Society on one of their trips. This provided an opportunity of seeing vegetation a little different from that around Auckland. The trip was led by Mr Ted Williams.

The day dawned wet and stormy. It was the same day that in Wellington three runners became lost and subsequently died of exposure. About a dozen people faced the elements. We met in pouring rain and strong wind. It was decided to abandon the original plan which was to go over Hawkin's Hill, down Spooky Gully to the beach. Instead we drove to the beach and walked up the gully a short way to avoid the worst of the wind.

At its entrance Senecio lautus, Disphyma australe and Apium australe were growing on a gravel slope. Further on we found Rhagodia triandra. On a cliff was Craspedia uniflora forming a rosette. It occurs frequently on coastal areas around Wellington.

Clumps of flax were in flower. The stems were shorter and the flowers were more yellowish than the flax I am most familiar with. They were Phormium cookianum. A plant with long thin spikes for leaves was Aciphylla sp. We left the track which streaked on through grassland and up over the cliffs and hillocks. Sliding down a steep slope into the gully we then crossed and re-crossed the stream wading up through it at times, as we progressed inland. We passed Adiantum sp. and Oxalis lactea growing on the bank. At a small waterfall Corybas orbiculatus was growing on the steep wet bank exactly where one would expect, according to Mr Hatch (Orchid trip at Huia, August 1980). There was a considerable amount of vegetation in the spot, obviously spared in the clearing of land for grass, e.g. shrubs of Olearia rani, Hebe stricta and Myrsine australis. We climbed out of the gully and found Hymenanthera crassifolia. This specimen was quite prostrate with its tiny flowers under the stems facing the ground. It occurs commonly around Wellington. The tiny fern Asplenium flabellifolium was also growing in the grass. Reaching the top of the hillock we were met by the full force of the wind and driving rain. The long grass was soaking wet so there was no escape from wetness and the cold. Going downhill we entered low scrub of gorse, Senecio solanri and Hebe stricta. Here and there were delightful mounds of Pimelea prostrata in flower. The scent was quite distinct and no wonder it is called N.Z. daphne. Cyathodes fraseri was in flower. The pure white petals of Linum monogynum caught my attention.

We ate our lunch sitting before a roaring fire and accompanied by mugs of hot coffee at the home of Sheila Natusch and her husband. The house is old built of brick and tucked into the hillside overlooking the bay, a haven from the inclement weather.