

# Waimangu - Te Hapeotoroa

Martin Pearce



*'Rotomahana from Hape O'Torea', 1886*

*Figure 1. View from Hapeotoroa photographed by George Valentine after the eruption of Mt Tarawera 10 June 1886*

On the 7 August 2021, 12 of us headed down the Waimangu Valley. Our aim was to follow the path down past the thermal pools, up Mt Hazard then follow animal trails to the summit of Te Hapeotoroa on the edge of the reserve. The Botanical Society has visited the valley frequently, so we moved relatively quickly down the valley.

Mistletoes (*Ileostylus micranthus*) was pointed out growing on mahoe (*Melicytus ramiflorus*), kanuka (*Kunzea robusta*) and *Pittosporum tenuifolium*. As possums are controlled the numbers of the mistletoes appear to be growing. Large tree fuchsia (*Fuschia excorticata*) were in flower. Closer to Frying Pan Lake clumps of *Psilotum nudum* grow on the banks on the path edge along with sundew plants (*Drosera auriculata*). The path is easy going down through the valley until the climb up Mt Hazard. At the summit we stopped for a breather before dropping into the raupo crater. This area had regenerated after a small eruption in May 2016. Kanuka about a metre high were common. We then followed animal tracks through prickly mingimingi (*Leptecophylla juniperina* subsp. *juniperina*), wineberry (*Arisotelia serrata*), mahoe and kanuka to the edge of plantation pines. Hook grass (*Carex*

*uncinata*) was common. We connected with a track, possibly an old forestry road or firebreak. This was reasonably easy going apart from the occasional windfall. The track looked recently used by a quad bike and we quickly made our way to the summit of Te Hapeotoroa (Figures 1, 2) where we stopped for lunch (Figure 3). The area looked recently used, probably by hunters. Deer or wallaby browsing was evident on lower tree branches, saplings and even broom (*Cytisus scoparius*).



*Figure 2. The view from the summit of Hapeotoroa looking a lot more lush 133 years later. Photo: Martin Pearce*



*Figure 3. Lunch near the summit. Photo: Martin Pearce*



Figure 4. The trig at the summit, 577m. Great for spotting an incoming shower.  
Photo: Martin Pearce

After lunch we had a short diversion up to the trig (Figure 4), then down a seeming innocuous gully heading down to Lake Rotomahana. John pointed out a large pocket of *Blechnum colensoi*. The gully slowly dropped towards the lake then quickly became a bit steeper with little drop-downs. We navigated these before coming to a 40 m drop. This was a bit too extreme to clamber down without abseiling gear. We then climbed up the side of the gully, a fairly steep slope, but we all made it. The ridge was a lot easier to travel but even then, we needed to slip and slide down the occasional drop. John Hobbs spotted *Griselinia lucida* which isn't common in the valley. Paul also managed to remove one of the wilding pines *Pinus radiata*. We then followed the ridge down to the Waimangu Valley road before catching the valley bus back to the Visitor Centre. Although the majority of the day was easy going the last hour added a bit more adventure than we bargained for.