

Botanical Society Trip to Unitec and Mt Albert Research Centre Grounds

Anne Grace

A fine day on 8 June 1996 contributed greatly to a pleasant stroll through the Unitec grounds in Carrington Road, Rich Afford's garden in Mt Albert Road and the Mount Albert Research Centre grounds.

Dr Mike Wilcox led us around the grounds at Unitec focussing first on the area around the Student Services Building where we saw the largest Brazilian coral tree (*Erythrina crista-galli*) in New Zealand, a large old jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*), specimens of ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) in fruit and one of only two specimens in New Zealand of the Japanese tan oak (*Castanopsis cuspidata*). In this area there were also large specimens of native trees such as titoki (*Alectryon excelsa*), rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), totara (*Podocarpus totara*), pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*), rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) and puriri (*Vitex lucens*).

A clump of black-stemmed bamboo (*Phyllostachys nigra*) held our attention for some time as did the sweet-scented leaves and male flower buds of the bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*), the camphor tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*), and some basket fungi (*Clathrus cibarius*).

Mike has produced a report on the trees, recognising 12 that are "notable". We saw 5 of these.

A wetland that was created about 3 years ago drew our attention for some time. Key species here were raupo (*Typha orientalis*) and the native sedges *Elaeocharis sphacelata*, *Schoenoplectus validus*, *Baumea articulata*, *Bulboschoenus fluviatilis*, *Cyperus ustulatus* and *Carex lessoniana*. Ewen Cameron explained the differences, splitting the stems open to show the markedly different internal structures. There was also the exotic sedge *Cyperus eragrostis*, and the rush *Juncus effusus*.

After passing various willows (weeping - *Salix babylonica*, South American - *Salix chilensis* and corkscrew - *Salix matsudana*) alongside a stream, we reached the Horticulture Department greenhouses where Andrew Moloy, Carol Lockett and Leslie Haines showed us some current work. Highlights were the experiment to grow nikau without soil for use in a display, a 120 year old *Cycas revoluta* which was recovering after vandalism, some *Zamia furfuracea* (another cycad) confiscated by Port Agriculture, a collection of *Hoya* species, an experiment to grow kanuka standards for walking sticks and some grafted weeping grevilleas.

On our way to Mt Albert Research Centre we stopped at Rich Afford's garden (18 Mt Albert Road) to see a delightful mixture of native and exotic species that have been planted over the last 43 years. The size of the mangeao (*Litsea calicaris*) and karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*) were truly impressive. An enormous cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*) had died recently. Rich showed us a *Pittosporum michiei* from North Cape and a *Chordospartium stevensonii* (South Island).

We ate lunch in front of the historic Alberton homestead and then went on a brief foray around the grounds to see an Australian *Ficus coronata* with leaves like sandpaper and a South American poppy tree (*Bocconia frutescens*).

Dr Ross Beaver led us around the grounds of Mt Albert Research Centre, first showing us some unusual native species including *Cordyline* 'Ti Tawhiti' which has never been known to flower, prostrate kowhai (*Sophora prostrata*), *Myrsine* aff. *divaricata* from the Poor Knights Islands, *Cordyline kaspar* from the Three Kings Islands (whose progeny scattered around the tree are mostly hybrids), *Hibiscus diversifolius*, *Metrosideros bartlettii* from Radar Bush, Te Pahi and *Corokia macrocarpa* from the Chatham Islands.

At the end of the Hamilton Building we looked at male and female specimens of pukaniui *Meryta sinclairii*, with large numbers of seedlings beneath.

In the vicinity of the Dumbleton Building are located some South American plants brought into New Zealand because they might have potential as ornamentals including *Wiegandia* and *Puya*. We

encountered carob (*Ceratonia siliqua*) in flower and then further interesting native species from far off places: Poor Knights lily (*Xeronema callistemon*); *Pittosporum dalli* from North West Nelson; *Teucrium parviflora* which occurs near Tairua; a large-fruited *Coprosma macrocarpa* from the Three Kings Islands; and a tree form of *Hebe parviflora*.

Along the side of the driveway we stopped to collect *Macadamia tetraphylla* nuts and marvelled at the rock hard shells that the rats had managed to gnaw through.

On the other side of the driveway were some South American ornamentals - *Bauhinia*, *Dombeya*, *Phytolacca dioica* (same genus as inkweed), and the sweet-scented *Datura innoxia*. The sleek reddish growing tip of *Schizolabia parahybum* impressed us as did the pink-flowered *Tibouchina granulosa* and the smaller purple flowers of *Tibouchina multiflora*.

We passed between the macadamia trees into an enclave containing some weird and wonderful plants - a prolific paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), a giant-leaved *Ficus auriculata*, a blue-fruited *Syzygium*, *Ficus religiosa* from Buddha's tomb in India, monkey paw (*Chiranthodendron pentadactylon*), and a pawpaw (*Carica quercifolia*) with small fruit that those of us with no taste found to be delightful.

A visit to Mt Albert Research Centre would not be complete without viewing the rarest plant in the world, *Pennantia baylissiana*, which Duncan and Davies nurseries first grew from material from the sole tree from the Three Kings Islands.

We searched for an elusive African sausage tree before moving on to an area below the Cunningham Building which contained more native species from the nether regions - *Macropiper huglandii* from Lord Howe Island and *M. melchior*, the red-fruited *Elingamita johnsonii*, *Tecomathe speciosa* (in flower) all endemic to the Three Kings Islands, *Bohmeria* from the Kermadec Islands, *Streblus* hybrids (*S. banksii* x *S. smithii*), which were loaded with large insect galls, Three Kings milk tree (*Streblus smithii*), *Hibiscus trionum*, and *Astelia chathamica* 'Silver Spear'.

The brilliant vermilion flowers of the Queensland fire wheel tree (*Stenocarpus sinuatus*) were stunning. To complete the day we checked out an extensive plot of the native *Fuchsia procumbens* then proceeded to muse about the identity of a large tree beside the driveway - its flowers and fruit indicated that it was some kind of pear.

Most of us completed the day amazed by the beauty and diversity of plants that we had seen. Exposure to a great number of scientific names over a 5 hour period could become boring, but with the contrasts that we saw, there was never a dull moment.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Ewen Cameron for checking the scientific aspects of this trip report including helping with scientific names.

The Vascular Flora of Te Wakatehaua (The Bluff) Island, Ninety Mile Beach

P. J. de Lange

Introduction

During October 1990 and January 1996 I surveyed the vegetation of a series of low lying rocks located c. 8 km west of Te Kao. This geographic feature popularly known as "The Bluff" is the small outcrop referred to as Te Wakatehaua Island (The Bluff) on NZMS 260 N03 009238. Until 1995, Te Wakatehaua was used as a vantage point by tour buses working the Kaitaia - Cape Reinga tourist route. As a result, my initial survey found little of interest as the low turf communities of the island had been severely degraded by vehicle traffic and human trampling. Nevertheless, I was surprised to find one plant of the native sow thistle (*Sonchus kirikii*), so when the opportunity arose to visit the island in January 1996, I was keen to see how that plant