

Easter Trip to Puketi Forest

Enid Asquith & Maureen Young

Thursday 20 April 2000

Four early arrivees spent Thursday night in the old pre-fab schoolroom hut at the Forest HQ, and were lulled to sleep by the calls of moreporks and kiwi. Later in the night rain drumming on the roof was a much more ominous sound.

Friday 21 April

Under grey threatening skies the four set off down Puketi Road to meet local farmer (and Bot. Soc. member) Ian Wilson, who promised to fill in the morning profitably. This he did in Puketi Scenic Reserve, over the road from his farm and from the larger forest. This reserve has a river running down the centre and bluffs down each side, but under Ian's guidance we managed to avoid the bluffs. Carpets of filmy ferns clothed the ground and the rocks, including *Hymenophyllum flexuosum*. By mid-day the rain was falling heavily. Back at camp the rest of the party had arrived and mysteriously gained entry to the hut. Relentless rain dampened the afternoon walk on the magnificent boardwalk through Manginangina Reserve and down the "closed" walk to a kauri dam. A small avocado plant down by the dam was an anomalous addition to the flora. A hasty retreat to dry clothes and warm showers was deemed desirable.

Saturday 22 April

Rain threatened still as we drove out to the Mokau Road quarry - an exciting roller-coaster ride over a pot-holed mud track with deep water courses to trap the unwary driver, even with his 4x4 vehicle. However, only once was there any hindrance to our drive through the gorse-bordered track in.

The signpost told us the Onekura Track was a 1¼ hour walk, but 3 hours later we were wet, muddy and cut up by the four species of gahnia, and hungry but happy, having encountered toatoa, *Pittosporum virgatum*, *Metrosideros fulgens* in flower, two *Sticherus* and two *Gleichenia* species all growing together. We trampled over flowering *Earina autumnalis*. Sadly, we couldn't find the *Davallia tasmanii* subsp. *crispata* (= *Davallia* "Puketi") down the bluff where both Ian and Maureen had found it previously. However, we did find *Halocarpus kirkii*, *Dracophyllum latifolium* and robust

Tmesipteris tannensis growing all over the ridge and on a kauri tree base. There was *Alseuosmia banksii* in fruit, *Libocedrus plumosa*, *Leionema nudum* (= *Phebalium nudum*), *Dicksonia lanata* - in fact so many "specials" that it became impossible to choose just one highlight. It was a long, hard tramp back to the quarry in the afternoon but yet again we had finds of *Libertia pulchella* in moss banks along the track and then *Brachyglottis myrianthos* in abundance. Perhaps the most unexpected find of the day was a sapling of *Pseudopanax gilliesii*, a single specimen, and listed in the Flora as being found only on the north side of Whangaroa Harbour and Little Barrier Island. A wonderful day of excesses and no rain, completed by pulling a battered Mazda out of the mud, much to the relief of the three teenaged occupants.

Sunday 23 April

More rain! The planned walk was postponed, and the day spent around the hut. The Nature Walk occupied part of the morning. Bullate leaves on *Alseuosmia banksii* were easily confused with ramarama. The cooks devised a delicious soup for lunch to warm the cockles of our hearts. In late afternoon when the rain eased, a walk along the Pirau Road stretched legs and gave a change of botany. The wet gumland scrub sported *Epacris pauciflora*, *Dracophyllum lessonianum*, *Drosera binata* and *Schizaea fistulosa*. Two Danish visitors helped to while away the evening and the wine.

Monday 24 April

A better day, and after a roadside stop to compare the leaves of *Ackama rosifolia* and juvenile *Weinmannia silvcola*, we met up with Ian Wilson and drove over his farm to the beginning of the Waihoanga Kauri Walk. Right at the beginning was *Loxsonia cunninghamii*, and then it was into kauri country with lots of *Schizaea dichotoma* and *Halocarpus kirkii* of all sizes, from many small seedlings to very large trees. Two trees of *Pittosporum virgatum* were seen, one with the lobed juvenile leaves. All four species of *Tmesipteris* were present, sometimes growing from tree fern trunks clothed with *Hymenophyllum lyallii*. A loop track passed many large kauri trees with candelabra-like *Dracophyllum latifolium* underneath.

Back at camp a little whittled rooster was waiting on the doorstep. "Greetings from Denmark" was the legend it bore. Steve climbed on the roof and cleaned out the spouting and the rest of us carried out a botanical survey of the contents.

The results were:

Dicotyledons

Coprosma robusta
Hypochoeris radicans
Leptospermum scoparium
Nertera depressa

Monocotyledons

Holcus lanata
Juncus gregiflorus
Juncus planifolius
Typha orientalis

Tuesday 25 April

After a clean up people went their various ways, some calling in at Forest Road to have a look at the camping ground at the far end of the forest.

Participants: Enid & Paul Asquith, Lisa Clapperton, Steve Cook, Carol & Garry McSweeney, Helen Preston-Jones, Alison Wesley, Maureen Young, and Ian Wilson, in part.



Flora of "Okahu Islet", Puhoi River

Enid Asquith, Graeme Hambly & Maureen Young

On the mangrove flats of the Puhoi River on the north side of Johnson's Hill, (the hill between the Waiwera River and the Puhoi River), is a small islet which is only surrounded by water at spring tides. We have taken the liberty of bestowing the name "Okahu" on this unnamed feature of the riverscape. The Okahu Creek lies to the north-west, the Okahu Creek Scenic Reserve bounds the main highway to the north of the creek, and the Okahu Block is the title of the land immediately to the south of the islet. The islet (map reference: NZMS 260 R10 606178) would be c. 50 m by 15 m (long axis NNW-SSE) by 6 m high at the highest point. It is c. 80 m from the nearest point of land, and can be reached at most tides in gumboots. The base is an outcrop of Waitemata sandstone that borders the Puhoi River at the NNW end of the islet, and it is topped by crumbly red clay.

The most prominent feature, especially when viewed from State Highway 1, is the crown of pine trees (*Pinus radiata*). Some shrubby pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) are evident about the base, but there is nothing to prepare the visitor for the variety of native plants to be found. The vascular flora numbers 56 species, 48 of which are indigenous. There are 12 sizable pine trees and some seedlings. The largest pines are at the NNW end, and apart from the normally epiphytic ferns, *Pyrrosia eleagnifolia* and *Microsorium pustulatum*, which are here growing terrestrially, little grows under them. Away from the large pines, the commonest plant is, surprisingly, *Leionema nudum* (= *Phebalium nudum*). This is also common in the nearby Okahu Creek Scenic Reserve, though uncommon elsewhere in the district.

Conclusion

The large pine trees should be killed but not felled, as this would cause too much damage. The small pines, the one small macrocarpa, and a couple of large prickly hakea should be removed. Arthur Dunn from Puhoi is checking on the status of the islet, and will carry out this work if it is not privately owned.

Appendix: "Okahu Islet" flora, Puhoi River

Ferns (8)

Asplenium flaccidum
Asplenium oblongifolium
Huperzia varia
Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum
Hymenophyllum rarum
Microsorium pustulatum
Pteridium esculentum
Pyrrosia eleagnifolia

Gymnosperms (5)

Agathis australis
**Cupressus macrocarpa*
**Pinus radiata*
Phyllocladus trichomanoides
Podocarpus totara

Dicotyledons (26)

Apium prostratum

**Atriplex prostrata*
Coprosma lucida
Coprosma robusta
Corokia buddleioides
Cyathodes juniperina
Gaultheria antipoda
**Hakea sericea*
Hebe stricta
Kunzea ericoides