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Bot Soc Field Trip to Paremoremo Scenic Reserve, 16 Sept 2000

Rhys Gardner

Twenty or so of us gathered on a fine and not-as-brisk-as-it-can-be-here spring morning by the bridge over Paremoremo Creek, just beyond the prison, at the southern end of this the North Shore's largest reserve. We set out along the track (a modest Lands & Survey legacy) on the narrow floodplain at the foot of the escarpment, past kahikatea and large kanuka, kowhai and turepo, making for the creek's several rapids. It may have been these that gave the locality its name, one meaning of which (still appropriate in view of modern developments) is "slippery".

On reaching the first rapids we were pleased to find thriving quantities of *Gunnera monoica*, in the seepages over the cool mossy potholed beds of Albany Conglomerate, the light diffused in through the trees along the open eastern edge of the creek. *Loxsoma cunninghamii*, regionally uncommon, was here too on the creek banks, in a dozen or so discrete colonies most less than a metre or so in diameter. A plant we did not find, not that we realized Paremoremo to be one of its sites, was *Libertia pulchella*, collected by Margaret Sexton in 1957 (AK 54840).

Some disagreement surfaced when the question of transplanting some of the *Gunnera* was voiced — was it "playing God" or "playing with God"? Dithering continued as we went up and back along the prison-owned pasture on the extensive floodplain on the south side of the creek, and, not finding a good place to cross (the creek at this

higher end of the reserve is entrenched and without rapids) we contented ourselves with a furtive lunch under the streamside kanuka, totara, Hall's totara and tanekaha.

After lunch we reentered the reserve and began to climb up and down along the scarp. We passed over the site of the old "camp" as marked on the 1940s 1: 25000 topo. sheet, with its shell and glass (or was it obsidian?). At the base of the scarp nearabouts we saw numerous small deep pits, perhaps made by kauri-gum fossickers.

The eastern valley is one of the great secret places of Auckland's reserves, with half a dozen or so very large matai, rimu (one recently fallen) and kahikatea. The kauri on the ridges are perhaps not as large as those in the Albany Scenic Reserve but are quite numerous, and the seldom-visited pole kauri stand on the ridge in the valley's main fork is pristine with saplings, mosses and orchids. Hard beech is here too.

Numerous loquat and Chinese privet seedlings were pulled out from below the first large matai, but none of monkey-apple, even though young plants of this are all too common further back along the main creek. This circumstance, and the general lack of young matai, tends to suggest that there might be a not completely unexpected local scarcity of native pigeon here, and that the monkey-apple might be spreading not through the agency of these birds but by floating in from upstream properties.

