

I've seen this place from the train: Bot Soc visit to Ann's Creek and Hamlin's Hill, 18 August 2001

Rhys Gardner

Twenty or so BotSoc members gathered at 10 am near the hulking new Southdown electricity station (old freezing-works site), lured not so much by the weather as by promises that a few shy places might still be found here at the very northeast corner of the Manukau Harbour. In fact the best of these, the Ann's Creek estuary and lava flows between the railway and the Great South Road, has recently been contended for in the Environment Court, with Auckland City's attempt to prevent an industrial zoning being only partially successful.

Finding our way across the railway embankment, without seeing any *Linaria pelliseriana* (here in 1997) but pausing to gather a reference leaf of *Geranium solanderi* "coarse hairs", we reached the best-vegetated lava flow (grid ref. R11 734733) and soon geranium experts were at a premium as first a number of *G. retrorsum* and then many *G. solanderi* "large petals" were found. This seems to be the last place in the Auckland/Manukau region where the two species still grow together. *Pelargonium inodorum* was seen too; this appeared a few years ago after a fire. A new record was *Thelymitra longifolia*, several individuals growing at one spot near the southwest corner of the tongue.

This part of the Manukau is the type locality for *Coprosma crassifolia*, with the first collection of it being made here by Colenso in 1842. It still grows in the general vicinity but one of the best colonies, on the lava tongue we were exploring, was smashed down by heavy machinery a couple of years ago during mangrove-control work instigated by landowner Hastings. A few adults and some optimistic knee-high juveniles remain. We searched the spoil line along the dredged channel (Hastings' Cut) for the *Chenopodium glaucum* that had come up among the shelly sand when this cut was new (March '00). None was found; Mike Wilcox suggested though the plant might usually be an annual. A number of small plants of akeake (*Dodonaea viscosa*) were observed, as were their parents a short way away on the small lava tongues coming down from the north.

References

- NZ Fencible Society. [1997]. *The Royal New Zealand Fencibles*. Privately published, Auckland. [copy at Auckland Public Library].
- Kermode, L. O. 1992. Geology of the Auckland urban area. *Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences*.
- Nichol, R. 1983. Aerial photography on Hamlin's Hill. *NZ Archaeological Society Newsletter* 26: 45-50.

We took lunch back in the Southdown Reserve on Hugo Johnson Drive, a prematurely derelict area of "native" shrubberies and fences expensive enough to drive a ratepayer up them (despite notices warning of asbestos) but with a dry-seated rotunda sufficient to shelter us all.

Most of us continued on to nearby Hamlin's Hill. The weather now would not have disgraced the Tararuas, though the assemblage of "native" plantings put in over the last few years by Forest & Bird was a bit harder to categorize. During the perambulation, as often as the sleeting allowed, Alistair MacArthur recounted his efforts to protect the numerous *Coprosma crassifolia* that have sprung up in the white poplar/hawthorn scrub on the southwest face of the hill.

Notes

1. "Ann's Creek" was named by the Otahuhu Fencibles after the ship that brought them to this country. The naming took place it seems in 1849, in a little ceremony to mark the making of the first bridge across the Creek at what is now the Great South Road (NZ Fencible Society, 1997).

2. Hamlin's Hill, a conspicuous and isolated ridge of "Waitemata Sandstone", is named for the missionary James Hamlin (1803-1865). Presumably it was part of his land-holdings but I know no detail. The well-known 1850 map of Hochstetter "The Isthmus of Auckland and its extinct volcanoes" figures this ridge but mistakenly puts the label "Hamblin's Hill" further to the east on the banks of the Tamaki, on what is now known as the McLennan Hills Volcano (Kermode 1992).

The Maori name for Hamlin's Hill is Mutukorea. There was a large prehistoric settlement here and in the early 1980s Auckland University photographer Godfrey Boehnke hung out of a light plane and recorded something of this tattooed landscape (Nichol 1983).

3. To the best of my knowledge two other higher-plant species besides *Coprosma crassifolia* have the Auckland isthmus as their type locality: *Astelia grandis* ("Ponsonby Road") and *Potamogeton cheesemanii* "St John's Lake".

