

The island was purchased some ten years ago by Mr. Seymour George, M.H.R., and was leased to Mr. Sanford, who has been here ever since. It is about 360 acres in extent, and the residence is prettily situated on the margin of the sandy beach of the picturesque bay, which is sheltered by a semi-circular range of hills from nearly all the prevailing winds. It says much for Mr. Sanford's energy and industry that he has cleared nearly the whole area of the island single-handed, and laid it down in grass. He devotes his attention principally to the rearing of sheep and cattle, but has grown for experimental purposes four varieties of tobacco - Connecticut, Florida, Ohio, and Virginia. A quantity of the tobacco leaves which have not undergone all the preparatory processes may be seen at our office. As there are no other settlers or schoolmaster near, Mr., Sanford's elder children hold school every afternoon for the little ones, and in the evening Mr. and Mrs. Sanford supervise the lessons. But this is a digression.

A number of the excursionists who landed were hospitably entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Sanford, who placed their home at their disposal, and provided milk and other refreshments, tea, fruit, &c. After spending a pleasant hour the party bade their hospitable host and hostess and family adieu, and leaving them to their Robinson Crusoe life, put off to the steamer. Mr. Sanford, finding that a Saturday's HERALD and some other papers were onboard, got his son to launch a dinghy and put off to the steamer for these much prized treasures in that out of the way place.

The run home to Auckland was a pleasant one, a fair wind and a flowing tide sending the steamer along. As Drunken Bay was opened the sun sank, capped by a bank of clouds in a gorgeous sunset, behind the Waitakere ranges - the shafts of light streaming across

the bosom of the Waitemata and tipping the dancing wavelets with molten gold. Messrs. Sharpe and Drummond were speedily on the bridge to enjoy the beautiful spectacle, but whether they "caught the sunset effects" remains a secret. As the shades of evening set in, and the stars came out to keep their watch and ward, the ladies also came out to keep their shells and beguiled the journey with music - Mrs. Campbell (whose voice has often been listened to with pleasure in our Auckland concerts) contributing some choice songs; Miss Archibald, Miss Batger, and Mr. H. L. James selections from "Pinafore" and "Patience;" while Mr. James, sen., warbled "My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here," which, after his revelling in the picturesque glories of Otatou and Rakino, was somewhat rough on these localities, to say nothing of the respected Naturalists' Field Club. The steamer reached the Queen-street wharf at 7.30, all departing to their homes thoroughly pleased, with the day's excursion; even the representative of the Law did not feel it in his heart to enter a demurrer, or move for a new trial, or a change of venue. The club contemplates only making one more excursion this season, but next season the "lions" of Otatou and Rakino will bear another interview and inspection, as Mr. Cheeseman has certainly scored a success this time.

Captain Jackson and his men were courteous and obliging, and did much to promote the comfort of the party. Some skippers magnify their office and "shiver their timbers," and (apropos?) their eyes till the passengers are thoroughly miserable or placed in bodily fear, but Captain Jackson is "not that sort of man." Both in landing and in embarking at the various places everything was done to consult the wishes and contribute to the enjoyment of the excursionists."

Another 1883 Field Naturalists' Club Visit to Rakino and Otatou (Noisies) Islands

Mike Butler

Auckland Evening Star November 12, 1883.

"Members of this Club with their friends, to the total number of 112, left Queen-street Wharf in the p.s. Tainui, at 9 o'clock on Friday morning, bound for Rakino Island, outside of Motutapu. The run down occupied a pleasant two hours, at the end of which the steamer came to anchor in a semi-circular bay, opposite the island's only house. A large proportion of the excursionists landed in boats, while the rest went on further in the steamer to one of the two Otatou Islands, hoping as ardent naturalists, to be rewarded with new and rare plants, and possibly animals. Their expectations, however, were scarcely realised for they got no new vegetable specimens, and schnapper, which was caught in abundance, can scarcely be reckoned a rarity. Mr. Cheeseman, the Club's indefatigable secretary, found a specimen of the only

melon indigenous to New Zealand (*sicyos angulata*). Its fruit, at maturity, is only about the size of a bean. Other rarities were the hymenanthus, and the rhagodia (very uncommon) which latter also occurs at Rakino. Several orchids, most of them common, were found.

On the beach at Otatou was picked up a human jaw-bone (lower), with all the teeth save one intact, and perfectly sound. Each of the first double teeth was ground down in the most singular manner, as if the owner, when living, had been in the habit of masticating very hard food (say fern-root.) Judging from the teeth, Drs. Moore and Purchas diagnosed the fragment to have belonged to a male Maori, aged between 50 and 60, who was possibly drowned in the

harbour years ago. Those who had landed at Rakino were most hospitably entertained by Mr. Sandford, who lives here with his family, and raises sheep and cattle. The Club had evidently been expected, for extensive preparations had been made, and food and drink were supplied throughout the whole day. The excursionists had reason to be thankful to Mr. Sandford and family for their very courteous attention. Rakino did not seem to yield anything very remarkable from a naturalists' point of view, and ferns and plants worth taking being rare, some attention was directed

to oyster-gathering, and it must be confessed, with great success. Oysters abound on the rocks surrounding the island and are to be had in cartloads. About 4 p.m., the Tainui arrived from Otatou, and re-embarkation commenced. The last stragglers were on board about 5.10, and a start was made for home. The route taken was the alternative one round the outside of Motutapu, by Rangitoto Reef, and through the Channel. Queen-street wharf was reached shortly after 7, and the excursion had proved a most enjoyable one."

Auckland Botanical Society Trip to Dunn's Bush, Puhoi 15 September 2001

Maureen Young & Arthur Dunn

As I try and decipher my notes taken on the day I am reminded of the weather. In a word: wet. The route to our meeting point was along the valley of the Puhoi river showing starkly the effect of the floods some weeks previously and we were spared those conditions, but the ground underfoot was slippery in the extreme and the quote of the day was 'Even Helen got muddy.'

We met at the Dunn homestead and Arthur explained how the bush had once been part of his farm, but was covenanted, and eventually given to, the Queen Elizabeth 2 Trust. An active trapping programme has succeeded in reducing possum numbers greatly.

The reserve consists of two tracts ('Arthur's Bush' and 'Val's Bush') and our plan was to visit both but as we moved at botanists' pace, we were still in Arthur's Bush at lunchtime. As the rain showed no sign of stopping we did not go to Val's Bush, which meant we did not see the carmine rata which we were told was just coming into flower.

However we found *Rhabdothaminus solandri*, and *Alseuosmia* sp. in flower, as well as *Pterostylis banksii* and *P. alobula*, *Acianthus sinclairii* with a few flowers left, and the remains of some *Corybas* sp.

We saw very few Kauri trees, the principal gymnosperm being kahikatea, and some of these were mighty; the tamest had a circumference of 6 m and a diameter of 1.9 m (but it was hollow). There were also large specimens of the hybrid *Metrosideros excelsa* X *robusta*.

A welcome sight was the abundance of *Collospermum hastatum*, both perching and on the ground(= no possums). At lunchtime a sharp-eyed botanist spied a *Raukawa edgerleyi* epiphytic on a tree-fern. We noticed four different tree-ferns, as well as *Cyathea medullaris*. *C. dealbata* and *Dicksonia squarrosa*, there were colonies of *C. smithii* in the valleys. A new *Asplenium* to some of us, *A. lamphrophyllum*, proved easy to recognise by its oil of wintergreen scent. We also found *A. hookerianum*, a delicate little species. On the way up the hill, in a (normally) dry area we found a colony of *Libocedrus plumosa* looking healthy.

By this time most of our concentration powers were on keeping ourselves upright and the wet hair out of our eyes, also my ballpoint pen stopped writing on the wet page, so here the account must end. But not without a word of appreciation to Arthur and Val Dunn for making us welcome, and for preserving and making public an area with a rich variety of indigenous plants.

New Zealand Spinach in Mangere

Mike Wilcox

New Zealand spinach, also known as Warrigal greens, and, in Maori, kokihi or rengamutu (*Tetragonia tetragonoides* (Pall.) O. Kuntze: Aizoaceae) seems to be quite rare in the wild (de Lange & Cameron 1997), at least around Auckland. It is a prostrate, sprawling plant with soft stems and rather succulent foliage and can spread to around 2 metres. Leaves are oval or diamond-shaped and about 75 - 100 mm long. The small, greenish yellow flowers appear at the leaf bases throughout most of the year. It gets its unimaginative specific name from the fact that it was first described by Pallas in 1781 as *Demidovia tetragonoides*.

In 1999 I found single-plant colonies, both apparently wild, of New Zealand spinach at two sites in Mangere. One was on the old Mangere Bridge itself, where it was growing amongst buck's horn plantain (*Plantago coronopus*) on the seaward side; the other was on a small rocky islet in Ambury Regional Park. In October 2000 I took some cuttings home and set them. Now we have a thriving patch in the garden of the local provenance, with an endless supply of this nutritious vegetable, rich in Vitamin C (Phillips & Rix 1995; Pomare 2000). The leaf reputedly has a high soluble oxalate content which, if consumed in large quantities, can be toxic, and is best not eaten raw. It requires