

Delightful Hideaway - Greenhithe

Chris McKain

At the end of Marae Road in Greenhithe is a half-hectare area of scrub known to the older residents of the area as "humbug point". This reserve is at the end of a ridge that forms Marae Rd, as it drops into the sea. The North side is a cliff face of some 40 m, while the South is rather a steep slope to the shoreline.

This sandstone projection into the upper Waitemata has been a favourite swimming spot for the youth of Greenhithe. I swam there during the 60s and 70s, as did my mother before WW2. Being sandstone the cliff banks are rather unstable; numerous slips have occurred over the years, keeping the vegetation to those plants which can regenerate quickly: mainly gorse, pampas, pines, and kanuka. The slips also create a challenge for the local children to keep the track open on the cliff. Strangely, I have noticed little difference in the position of the cliff edge since I frequented the area thirty years ago.

Radiata pines have dominated the skyline for some time, aggravating the erosion. Gorse comes and goes, as the various Greenhithe councils try to manage the small flat area used as a lookout. Meanwhile the native flora has steadily recovered from the time the whole area was cleared. Typical of the northern Waitemata coastline is dry poor soil; the main vegetation is a mixture of kanuka, gorse, hangehange, *Coprosma* sp. *Gahnia*, *Lycopodium*, *Dracophyllum*, and *Astelia* sp. The primary tree species is tanekaha - becoming established now; I found a sole rewarewa. This reminded me of parts of Beach Haven and Birkenhead, and is typical of this type of regeneration. Exceptions are the two gems, mairehau and Mida maire; trees are found throughout the North Shore, but not in such localised concentrations. Unusually common was korokio, but no kauri. This point of land forms a break

in the normal kohekohe/titoki forest that forms the balance of the Greenhithe coastline.

With the cliff track gone, the only way to the beach is down the old gorse-lined track onto the point. It still seems a popular short walk as someone tries to keep gorse clear; evidence of this was about a week old. Along the track a mixture of native and exotic plants is seen: gorse, mingimingi, kumerahou, cotoneaster, pampas, *Gahnia*, *Coprosma*, and boneseed, as if old and new are trying to compete with each other.

Most of the North Shore is dominated by kanuka, with manuka making up only a small proportion. And here I found just one manuka.

Only three grass species were found; I would have expected many more, especially introduced species.

A few ginger plants were sighted, along with some sick wandering-jew, expected in an urban environment. What I found disheartening was the number of ivy seedlings throughout the area. Public education is needed to alert householders how dangerous this plant is, especially when it seeds from high places. It is related to five-finger, and seems similarly expert at colonising the bush. Another weed, boneseed, has been in the area so long that my mother, now 81, thought it was native!

It was pleasing to find no wasps. This sandstone is ideal for them, and there have been some good nests in the past. It seems no native borrowing mason bees either. Passion-vine hoppers are usually present, but not this time, as I did not notice any getting into my face as I explored. A whole orchestra of cicadas though - the din put up by them at this time of year is deafening.

Plant list

Ferns and fern allies

Asplenium oblongifolium
Gleichenia dicarpa
Lycopodium deuterodensum
Lycopodium voluble
Microsorium pustulatum
Pteridium esculentum
Pyrrhosia eleagnifolia

Gymnosperms

**Pinus radiata*
Phyllocladus trichomanoides

Dicots

Alseuosmia macrophylla
**Chrysanthemoides monilifera*

Coprosma lucida
Coprosma rhamnoides
Coprosma robusta
Corokia buddleioides
**Cotoneaster glaucophyllus*
Cyathodes juniperina
Dracophyllum sinclairii
Epilobium sp.
**Eriobotrya japonica*
Geniostoma rupestre
**Hakea salicifolia*
**Hakea sericea*
Hebe stricta
**Hedera helix* subsp. *helix*
Knightia excelsa
Kunzea ericoides
Leonema nudum

Leptospermum scoparium
Leucopogon fasciculatus
Mida salicifolia
Myrsine australis
Nestegis lanceolata
Olearia furfuracea
Pittosporum tenuifolium
Pomaderris kumeraho
Pomaderris phyllicifolia
Pseudopanax arboreus
Pseudopanax lessonii
**Taraxacum officinale*
**Ulex europaeus*
Weinmannia silvicola

Monocots

**Asparagus scandens*

Astelia banksii
Astelia ?solandri (no fruit)
Astelia trinervia
**Cortaderia jubata*
Dianella nigra
Gahnia lacera
Gahnia setifolia
**Hedychium gardnerianum*
Lepidosperma laterale
Phormium tenax
Poa anceps
Rytidosperma sp. (no fruit)
Schoenus tendo
**Tradescantia fluminensis*
Uncinia banksii
Uncinia uncinata

