

Islington Bay Cyrtostylis oblonga and Corysanthes triloba were also in flower, but a high-light of the day was when one member found a very large clump of Psilotum triquetrum with many fronds at least 18" high.

(Hatch's names.

Cyrtostylis oblonga = Acianthus reniformis var. oblonga.  
Acianthus sinclairii = Acianthus fornicatus var. sinclairii.  
Corysanthes triloba = Corybas trilobus )

Miss Dingley who lead the excursion has kindly forwarded the above record. We should note the remark about deer. It is to be remembered that in some cases the damage done by animals is so complete that it ceases to be noticeable. For instance, in the vicinity of the drinking place at the base of the cone, the undergrowth has entirely disappeared so that people often remark, "How like an English woodland". Yet, a few weeks ago, during a talk to the Devonport Gardening Circle on Rangitoto, when the editor showed photographs of this "English woodland" scene, a member of the audience stated that she remembered it being necessary to cut a way through the dense undergrowth in that area in order to reach the summit. In this connection, we are glad to note that our President, Mr. L.H. Millener, has forwarded to the Wild Life Department, a detailed letter, supported by photographic evidence, dealing with damage to the native plant covering of Rangitoto.

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It is always good to hear from old friends - particularly when they remember the News Letter. Mrs. Allen (nec Molesworth) has always maintained her interest in our doings, and now she has sent us a most valuable account of what is surely one of the most remarkable private gardens in Great Britain. We are greatly indebted to her for her kindness in "taking us with her" to this fascinating spot.

"Dear Miss Crookes,

Recently I have been staying with Major A. Dorrien Smith, whose famous sub-tropical gardens in the Isles of Scilly are I think well-known to New Zealanders because of the great wealth of New Zealand plants they possess. I thought perhaps members might be interested to hear about some of the plants I saw there. Professor Wall (T.N.Z.I. Vol.60 1930) listed the plants of Tresco Abbey gardens, but since then the severe winter of 1946-47 killed and set back a great many treasures.

The Scilly Isles, belonging to the Duchy of Cornwall, are a little group of rocky islands lying about 30 miles south west from the Cornish coast. When Augustus Smith (Major Dorrien Smith's great uncle) commenced the gardens prior to 1830, the small island of Tresco, was quite bare, not even gorse would grow for there was no protection from the fierce atlantic gales. So, after much experimenting, Pinus radiata was found to be by far the best tree to act as a first windbreak. These pines, now enormous, guard the outskirts of the extensive gardens thus breaking the force of the winds which would otherwise make the existence of a garden quite impossible. Cupressus macrocarpa also withstood the salt winds and was planted widely, but as they became high, they were gradually blown down, now only a few remain. As the Pines became tall there was then a need for another windbreak, a fairly low growing one. Major Dorrien Smith found that Olearia traversii was ideal for this and so both inside and outside the actual gardens and all over the island dense hedges of this are to be found. Pittosporum crassifolium is almost as popular and is likewise found everywhere especially as hedges protecting the small but numerous bulb fields. These two, of course, have seeded themselves everywhere and one frequently comes across small woods of them.

The tree which has been mainly responsible for bringing fame to the gardens is the Pokutukawa. In the summer, between June and August when the trees flower, masses of red can be seen from afar. From St. Mary's (the main island of the group) about two miles away this is an impressive sight. Of course I realise that this is not new nor exciting to Aucklanders but to the average Englishman whose knowledge of N.Z. is vague, these trees are unique and quite wonderful. So during the summer months crowds of people visit Tresco just to see the Pohutukawa flowering, for Tresco Abbey gardens are always open to the public just as they were in Augustus Smith's time.

These trees were fine specimens, being very happy in this environment, many being nearly 150 years old. Unfortunately this recent terrible winter cut them back severely and killed many younger ones which Major Dorrien Smith had planted himself 30 or 40 years ago. However the older trees are again showing green amongst the dead boughs and some trees this year produced a few flowers. So it is hoped that in a few more years they will have recovered and again clothe the gardens with red, once more upholding the beauty of New Zealand plants.

The greatest sufferer from this winter was Puka (Meryta sinclairii). Every one was killed. They were at least 50 years old, some over 20 feet high with great crowns. All the Mamaku, (C. medullaris) were also killed. This was most unfortunate for, unlike Puka, which loved the sandy soil and salt conditions, these tree-ferns had to be carefully watched and constantly watered for several years and it is a tribute to the care they received that they not only survived but grew to fair sized specimens. I saw the remains of trunks of about 12 feet high still standing.

One must not expect these gardens to possess the carefully tended flower beds, borders and trim lawns of the English gardens. They are informal and wild looking. The backgrounds are the deep green of N.Z. bush, and do not appear to have been artificially planted. Apart from the extensive collection of our native plants (Major Dorrien Smith told me that at one time he had nearly two-thirds of the N.Z. flora represented), there are exotic looking flowers from Chile, Peru, Canary Islands, S. Africa and Australia; and unlike the English gardens one finds flowers and growth all through the winter. Bordering some of the walks are queer Bromeliads (Puya spp. from Chile and Peru) and tall spikes of several species of Echium. Most of these Echium grow very tall and in the early spring their massive single spikes are most impressive and quite weird. They are usually about 15 feet high and are masses of bright blue, mauve or clear pink flowers, and come from the Canary Is. and Madiera. Below these our Fuchsia procumbens is an important plant and Libertia ixioides and L. grandiflora grow almost as weeds together with Cordyline pumilio. It is rather fun to see these native plants used equally with the butterfly delphiniums and red geraniums and pelargoniums. Against a brick wall I saw a bright show and found it to be Clanthus puniceus (alba was also there). Yellow kowhai does fairly well and I saw many self-sown young plants coming up through light bush just as they would at home.

Everywhere, as would be expected, are cabbage trees. There are many avenues of them and I think the finest is on the main road to the Abbey. I saw a very large bronze specimen with many heads and masses of creamy flowers. There are also interesting self-sown plants, I suppose garden hybrids, which Major Dorrien Smith affectionally calls "scillonensis". I saw two small specimens of Toii (Cordyline indivisa) but some tall stark trunks were gaunt reminders of that bitter winter. I undertsand that

these were never very happy and had to be watched carefully, but it is interesting that they survived at all under those conditions.

A tall tree, some sort of oak and a brick wall were completely covered with Muehlenbeckia complexa. It made a dense dark archway over a path but must not be cut as it is dear to the Dorrien Smiths and is known to them as "Muehly".

With few exceptions the New Zealand plants I saw looked extremely healthy and robust, in many cases being outstandingly large. Of these I found a very fine specimen of Nothopanax laetum, a perfect specimen of Griselinia lucida which must have been, we estimated, 40 ft. high and quite massive. Specimens of G. littoralis were common and amongst the largest I have seen. Suttonia australis and Titoki I saw were also fine specimens.

In the fork of an exotic tree a seed of Rata (M.robusta) had found a niche some years previously, and now had a firm hold. Very little of the host could be seen. Species of Rata are extremely plentiful especially in the more rocky places in the gardens, but they are all bushy trees, typical of the ground forms. They showed no signs of damage and I believe flower very well each year. When I saw them they were covered with bright red new growth. Carmine Rata is well established on a wall and although it suffered from the winter is flowering again. Several trees of the South Island Rata have attained very little height although they have been there for nearly 50 years. They have not yet flowered.

Myrtus bullata with its bronze appearance was cleverly used in corners and in flower beds. Hebes are everywhere and a vast number self-sown with many queer fellows resulting. Hebe speciosa is a very prolific flowerer and one specimen, self-sown has very lovely deep puce flowers.

Nothopanax and Pseudopanax are well represented and are all through the gardens. I found some very peculiar forms very like those of the Little Barrier Island and of Piha. They are most interesting. Specimens of P. ferox which were well established and were mature plants were all killed in 1947. There appear to be no seedlings. Among the commonest of the "bush" plants are the large leaved Coprosmas. I saw C. robusta in fruit and C. lucida in flower. C. grandifolia was large and by the side of C. propinqua, on the outskirts, there were many

C.X.cunninghamii. I noticed rhamnoides, arenaria and lineata.

There are fine specimens of Olearia and of Senecio. Chatham Island Daisy seemed very happy in a place where the ground was more damp than usual. Senecio greyii or compacta and S. perdiscioides are used greatly in the flower gardens, the former for its foliage, but it flowers continually. Olearia lyalii was happy as long as it was protected from draught. O. haastii was common, so was Shawia paniculata, which grows to tree size; it was used for background with Hoheria in front and lower down, Olearia solandri. Although many species have seeded themselves, nevertheless the different shades of green had been cleverly placed so that no one seeing this area could say that N.Z. bush was dull!

On rocky parts of the flower gardens, amongst gay mesembryanthemums grows Pachystegia insignis, forming very large plants which were covered with flowers. This is a species which also becomes self sown. The Pittosporums: I mentioned that Karo was very common. There is a peculiar form of this species which appears to come true from seed; it has strict leaves and the flowers are always solitary. Tarata is not very common but one tree I saw was colossal. P. cornifolium grows quite happily in forks of exotic trees but there is no P. kirkii, nor has it been tried (nor P. ellipticum). One shrub of P. dallii is there but has not yet flowered although it must be nearly 50 years old as Major Dorrien Smith brought it back with him after his second trip to N.Z.

Flax has been planted all over the island and the lovely spikes were at their best when I was there. Oddly enough it is not flax which is used to tie up plants, but cabbage tree and this is used extensively for most work in the gardens. Karaka trees were cut back rather badly, but are now recovering and are sending strong shoots from the bases of the trees. (A small plant of Rhabdothamnus remained unhurt during this winter and was flowering when I saw it).

As would be expected conifers are not happy at Tresco, but I did see some fine young Kauri about forty feet high bearing female cones. In a grove of Dicksonia fibrosa, squarrosa and Cyanthea dealbata (the floor carpeted with Blechnum from the Sts. of Magellan) stood a young Miro of about thirty feet. This, together with two Kahikatea (both only a few feet high) were brought back by the Major so their growth has indeed been slow.

In his young days, Major Dorrien Smith made two trips to New Zealand, bringing many plants back with him via Cape Horn. All this material had to be very carefully cared for on the voyages and carefully watched after its arrival and he is justly proud of the results. Although all records are kept of the plants, he seldom needs to refer to them for he remembers the history of nearly all.

Although the Major has treasures from many lands, our New Zealand plants are first in his affections. During his two visits he came to know Dr. Cockayne and Mr. Cheeseman very well and feels he has a link with the country still.

Major Dorrien Smith has written to the Botanical Society to ask if they can help him by sending some seeds to replace those plants which he lost during 1947-8. I know the society will be interested in his letter and appeal as this very fine garden, the only one of its kind in the British Isles, is important to us, not only as a corner of New Zealand so far away, but also because it provides valuable data on the behaviour of our native plants outside their natural environment and country.

Yours sincerely,

BETTY ALLEN."

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Major Dorrien Smith has written to the Editor, who would appreciate co-operation from members in obtaining seeds of the following:

*Alseuosmia banksii*, *A. macrophylla*.  
*Aristotelia racemosa*.  
*Clematis indivisa* & *colensoi*.  
*Cordyline terminalis*.  
*Coriaria arborea*.  
*Earina mucronata* & *suaveolens*.  
*Nothofagus truncata* (or any species)  
*Freycinetia banksii*.  
*Geranium traversii*.  
*Hedycarea arborea*.  
*Ixerba brexioides*.  
MERYTRA SINCLAIRII (specially)

- Contd.