

QUARTERLY NEWS LETTER

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AUCKLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

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Vacations are now over and the Editor takes this opportunity of welcoming members home. During the summer the Society held two camping trips one to the Waipoua Forest for a week and the other to Ponui Island for a week-end. As usual the arrangements and organisation of excursions fell to the lot of Mrs. Hynes and she discharged her responsibilities with customary efficiency. Under these circumstances it seems rather hard that she should have been called upon to record them as well, but an editor calling for copy knows no bowels of compassion for willing equines.

WAIPOUA FOREST TRIP

15th to 22nd January.

Waipoua Forest with its thousands of acres far from habitation and public accommodation presents a problem to those wishing to see more than the passing glimpse which is so often the lot of the average tourist. Our answer to this was to apply for permission to camp within the Forest where we would have access to all points.

A party numbering 27, to be increased to 29 later in the week, left Auckland on the Saturday morning arriving about 5 p.m. at our camp site, a large clearing near the Waipoua River at the Forestry Headquarters. Here in this ideal spot between the towering Kauri forest and the Pine plantation it was our privilege to spend a happy week in fine weather. On every conceivable opportunity full advantage was taken by both young and old of swimming in the stream.

Trips were made every day, either by foot or in our bus, going as far north as Opononi, then returning to Omapere where a pleasant day was spent. Southwards we visited Mongonui Bluff, where a swim in the breakers was seemingly the great attraction.

In the Forest, visits were made to Te Matua Ngahere, the kauri with the greatest girth, a mere 55 ft. and then to Cathedral Track, and later, while some returned back to the bus, the others walked to camp by the seven mile forest track. The first mile at the upper end of this track, so aptly called 'Cathedral Grove' is surely the most beautiful part of the Forest. Here the branchless trunks of the tall kauris reach skywards like huge columns and everywhere are fallen logs covered with filmy ferns. The rainfall varies considerably in different parts of the forest and this area must receive the maximum for the ferns to be so abundant. We certainly recommend Cathedral Grove to all visitors.

Another highlight was a trip led by Mr. Barr to see the large kauri in the Toronui Block, so seldom visited because of its inaccessibility. This tree has a girth of 50 ft. which places Tane Mahuta with its girth of 45 ft. as the third largest in the forest.

The proposed tour around Trounson Park on the return journey was

marred by rain which had started just as we were breaking camp. Only a few hardy souls splashed through the wet for a quick inspection.

All stores with the exception of two deliveries of meat and bread were taken with us, and credit for the success of the trip must go to our driver and camp organiser, Mr. George Barr. We wish to record our appreciation of his splendid services. We also say 'thank-you' to the Officer-in-Charge, Mr. R. Collins, and his wife for their help, and to Mr. Cox, Assistant Officer, for the Forest Quiz Session around the camp-fire.

PONUUI ISLAND

18th to 20th February.

Keyed up with expectations of pastures new the Ponui party left by the late afternoon bus for Kawakawa Bay. Skies had been threatening all day but fortunately a very heavy local downpour ceased in time for us to enjoy the novelty of being transported by barge to the launch which took us over to Mr. Fred Chamberlin's property on the south end of Ponui Island.

Once ashore, we were soon indulging in a light meal and the inevitable cup of tea at our headquarters - an outsized building, just a few yards from the beach. The number of Lilos in use was evidence that many members had prepared for extra comfort or for extreme discomfort.

The botanical rambles led by Dr. Rattenbury on both of the following days were very profitable. The Island is very hilly and there is a surprising amount of undamaged bush on the slopes and in the valleys. One large gully we explored on the northeast side was typical coastal vegetation with a good number of fern species, Pteris comans and Blechnum norfolkianum being particularly interesting. Kauri and its associates were plentiful on the ridges, groves of Tarairi were common lower down and some very fine specimens of Pukatea were seen. Particularly abundant was a hybrid Pseudopanax, probably P. crassifolium X P. lessonii, with an amazing variety of juvenile leaf forms. A feature of the vegetation of the outlying Islands is the much larger leaves and these were noted on Ponui Island, especially so on Olea cunninghamii. No serious attempt was made at listing plants although 47 species of ferns were counted. There is, however, ample scope for an ecological survey.

Other events of a non-botanical nature added to the pleasure of this enjoyable week-end, - although some may question if the portion of fried eel they sampled for breakfast should be included as pleasurable - and so we returned to the mainland full of gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlin for their many kindnesses and unanimous that a return visit would be most welcome.

P. Hynes.

Mrs. Wood, usually "gets round" during the summer and this year she and her husband took a trip to the far North - I am sure all members will enjoy the short account of her journey given below.

BOTANICAL NOTES FROM NORTHLAND.

Our Editress has once more asked me to submit an article on our trip at Christmas which this year, my husband and I spent in the far North.