

On a smaller scale but no less successful was our excursion to Ponui Island. This beautiful privately owned island was the scene of an excursion last year-an excursion so much enjoyed that it was decided to repeat it if possible in 1956. Dr. Hastings has kindly forwarded an account of this year's trip.

PONU I ISLAND REVISITED

by: V.E. Hastings

Last year's trip to the Island was so successful that another week-end excursion was planned for this year. Mr. and Mrs Chamberlain kindly gave us the use of the new woolshed as our late home - the barn on the beach - was being used for more mundane purposes than harbouring botanists.

Although our trip was only one week later than last year we were surprised to find that instead of arriving at the Island in daylight Mr. Chamberlain's launch was scarcely out of Kawakawa Bay before darkness was already settling over the water. The billy of tea supplied by Mrs. Chamberlain was greatly appreciated and soon afterwards all were in bed.

The following morning we set out over the hills for Green Bay where members had a refreshing swim. Being unable to lure the two boys away from their underwater spear fishing, we left them to it and climbed up the hill to the bush. From here we followed a track which led along the backbone of the Island itself and its surroundings. We made our way quietly past a big black, and in our eyes, a thoroughly nasty-looking bull-fortunately sound asleep. Beside the track was a fine *Kohokohe* (*Dysoxylum spectabile*) bearing an exceptionally large crop of fruit.

Soon we made our way into a steep gully where we found one of the objects of our trip - some healthy specimens of King Fern, (*Marattia salicina*). These were all confined by the steep banks of the stream so that they were growing almost in the water. Along the same stream were *Blechnums* which on the whole were more typical of *Blechnums norfolkianum* than those found in a different gully last year.

On the home trip we found nothing of note in the mile or so of swamp that lay between us and our prospective cup of tea. But, perhaps because once our feet had reached bottom we were more interested in pulling them out again than in the botanical wonders which threatened to - and in some cases actually did engulf us.

The next morning some of the members took a trip along the coast while others returned to the King Fern Gully to make a further examination of the ferns. Then they climbed to a ridge where the *Pseudopanax* hybrids were found last year. So a leaf was gathered from each tree found and put in the bag to be taken back to Auckland for a fellow botanist who has an insatiable appetite for such things. The return trip was made along the seashore where a number of plants of *Pomaderris rugosa* were found. We all thoroughly enjoyed our week-end and were grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain for allowing us another delightful holiday at the Island.

We are glad members found Pomaderris rugosa still growing on the Island. This little tree is a native of the Thames Botanical District, consequently we do not encounter it on the Waitakeres. For a long time it was thought to be a form of P. edgerley which inhabits the far north of the North Island. P. rugosa is taller than P. edgerley being from 4 - 8 feet while its branching is characteristic, being after the manner of the Lombardy poplar. Though it shares with P. edgerley the rusty hairs on the lower surface of the leaves, the upper leaf surface in P. rugosa is quite smooth, not covered with short stiff bristles as is P. edgerley.

Ed.]

While we are on the subject of islands, it might be remembered that some of our members formed part of the expedition organised by the Auckland University College Field Club for a visit to Mayor Island last year.

The only drawback to the trip was that only a short time could be spent on the Island. But the best use was made of all opportunities as will be seen on reading the following most informative article which has been kindly forwarded by Mrs. Hynes.

MAYOR ISLAND

In November it was my privilege to spend a week at Mayor Island. Except for the Caretakers of the Fishing Club there is no one living on the Island although in the past it must have carried a very large Maori population for Pa sites can still be detected on every hill.

The island is of volcanic origin and very rugged, the greater part of it being an old crater 5 miles in circumference and surrounded by a high wall which reaches to a height of over 1,000 ft. Gold-Smith writing in 1884 (Trans. N.Z. Inst. Vol. 17) mentioned the broken surface and poor locomotion but thought that a botanist would find treasures there. This statement would apply today in 1955, nearly 70 years afterwards. The huge crater and many spurs and valleys are practically unexplored.

The Pohutukawa is the dominant tree, while Suttonia australis, Mapou, is an abundant undershrub and near the lakes there is a good stand of youthful Pittosporum umbellatum. One thing noticeable is the lack of epiphytic plants. Asplenium flaccidum grows only on the ground and Blechnum filiforme changes its behaviour. The small creeping ground form was not seen, instead there is an intermediate form which covers the ground and rocks and becomes fertile in that state.

Perhaps the greatest surprise was to find Schizaea dichotoma growing under Pohutukawa trees along the track to Northwest Bay and far more abundant than ever seen in our northern kauri forests. This plant, often called 'Kauri fern' is also plentiful under the tea-tree scrub