

In connection with tree preservation, we should note an important point made by Doctor Newhook in his lecture to the Society, "Some Root Diseases of Forest Trees" (Sept. 30th).

The lecturer pointed out that mature kauri which send "peg roots" straight down into the soil, are very frequently attacked by a fungus disease which assails these roots when they reach a certain depth. This throws the burden of supplying the tree's needs from the soil upon the great masses of fibrous roots which surround the base of the bole and penetrate the rich humus to be found there. In nature this precious humus is protected by a layer of vegetation. Unfortunately when a fine specimen of mature kauri becomes known to the public, enthusiasts trample about it, the protective layer of vegetation is destroyed, the humus is interfered with the the life of one more valuable tree becomes endangered. It does not lie within our power to build protective barriers round much visited Kauris but we can at least "keep our distance" from them, explain the situation to friends and acquaintances, and secure their co-operation.

Beeches to the Fore

We are grateful to Mr. Mead for the following observations on some local beeches.

BEECHES AT TITIRANGI

On the northern flank of the spur of the Waitakere Ranges which stretches out to Titirangi, in gullies running from the Scenic Drive towards Glen Eden, occur the only stands of beech (Nothofagus truncata) known in the ranges or their vicinity. One of these localities is the gully between Konini and Tawini Roads, where the beeches are in small groups of six to twenty trees each, surrounded by mixed second growth bush; two of the groups are in a subdivisinal reserve of 17 acres which has recently come under the control of the Auckland Centennial Memorial Park Board, the other groups are in private property. The other Locality is a gully half a mile west of the former, and the beeches here are more scattered and not in such well defined groups. The trees are also larger; the largest measures 8 ft. 4 ins. girth at five feet above ground, and there are several shapely trees of the order of three feet in girth. Several have died from a cause which is not evident. Seedlings in each locality are very rare.

The beeches here do not exhibit the extreme gregariousness

shown in the Hunua Ranges (N. truncata) and in the middle Wanganui (N. solandri), where they occur in pure stands sharply distinct from the surrounding rain forest; but as the Titirangi area was cut over for kauri in the early days of settlement, and has been combed again for timber and firewood, perhaps the present distribution of the remaining beeches is not a true indication of their original habit.

A.D. Mead.

BEECH ON THE NORTH SHORE

On the North Shore there are several stands of beech (Nothofagus truncata) which, I understand, is closely allied to the "Red Beech", N. fusca.

In Kauri Park at Birkdale there are about two dozen specimens dotted about in the 14 acres. We measured these trees and the largest was 33 inches in circumference and about 40 ft. in height. The majority were between 20 - 24 inches in circumference and about 25 ft. in height. We measured several dead trees, the tops of which had completely rotted away, and the largest of these was 68 inches in circumference - another 50 inches. In fact they were all quite a lot bigger than the largest live tree there. We also noticed many of the smaller trees, in the 9 - 22 inches category, seemed to be dying on the tops. On the other hand we did see some perfect specimens. We came across numerous pieces of beech lying on the ground, easily recognised by their stag-like appearance.

My husband tells me that his father, who settled in the district some 70 years ago, knew of only two beech seedlings in the district. One was at Chelsea and the other on the property adjoining Kauri Park. What happened to the former I do not know, but the latter can still be seen - just a dry stick - it has obviously been dead for many years.

Another interesting point is that when Mr. Fisher Sr. settled on this property, he found a number of stumps and remains of dead beech on several ridges.

On the five acres adjoining Kauri Park we found some really good specimens. The largest is 56 inches in circumference and about 60 ft. tall, growing on a steep bank facing the south. Alongside it grows another fine beech about 40 ft. high and 39 inches in circumference.

We can boast of half a dozen on our own property - mostly about 25 ft. tall and 20 - 24 inches in circumference. A very big one