

At the base of the hill, we were met not only by our bus, but also by a representative of the "Northern Advocate" who was very interested in our visit. After a photograph of the party had been taken by a press photographer, we bade reluctant farewells to our Whangarei friends and took the road to Waipu Cove where we had lunch. Here we thoroughly enjoyed a few minutes on the beach before setting off for the bush in the gorge towards Mangawai.

Botanising here was disappointing as cattle had been in the area for some considerable time, making tracks and destroying the undergrowth. However, with the exclusion of the cattle, regeneration is taking place and it will no doubt be an area well worth visiting again in a few years time. From here we had a pleasant but uneventful journey home.

This short account of our trip cannot be closed without an expression of our sincere thanks to Mrs. Reynolds and Miss Maddren for their assistance, and to the members of the Whangarei Forest and Bird Society for their keen interest in our outings.

F. Warren.

ON TO MILFORD

On January 18th a combined party of 21 members of the Auckland Botanical Society and the Auckland Natural History Club set off on an ambitious South Island tour. After a magnificent sightseeing flight around the icefields of Mt. Cook we reached Glade House at the head of Lake Te Anau that same day to start the Milford Track. To do this trip without donning a parka is almost unbelievable - how lucky we were to have such perfect weather.

Two years ago I found Gastrodia cunninghamii less than a hundred yards from the boat landing - behold it was still growing there though over 3,000 tourists and also transport had passed that way. The tourists must have been very low abiding - or perhaps blind. G. cunninghamii is a true parasite and seems to grow only on the roots of Nothofagus spp.; we have found it near the Chateau but here it was abundant - rather dingy in appearance but the stem is strikingly and beautifully striated. The forest here was predominantly Silver Beech (Nothofagus menziesii), Mountain Beech (N. cliffortioides) and also a few Red Beech (N. fusca) which we were to lose and not see again till returning to this side of the divide in the Eglinton Valley. Excepting Phyllocladus alpinus this seemed to be the limit of conifers till reaching the mouth of the Arthur River near Milford. The number of species of shrubs forming the undergrowth of the beech forest was rather meagre. Neomyrtus pedunculata, Coprosma rotundifolia, and Pseudowintera colorata were the most abundant. A few lancewoods (Pseudopanax crassifolium) seen in this area somehow seemed

different from ours. Other old friends seen later, Shefflera digitata, Neopanax colensoi, Aristotelia serrata and others seen on Doubtful Sound and Stewart Island seemed to have queer characteristics. Although quite recognisable their appearance was rather puzzling. One of these days Dr. Rattenbury may give us his theory on these differences.

As we proceeded along that beautiful Clinton River the mountains slowly closed in, to form a typical glacial canyon; more than a dozen cameras were busy trying to register glimpses of that magnificent scenery. As we neared Pampolona the beech forest diminished and areas of sub-alpine shrubs and tussock appeared. On a forced march such as this little time can be spent wandering off the track to botanise. However, when I strayed over some bog land to unsuccessfully hunt for Utricularia I accidentally found a fern we had never seen before, Ophioglossum pedunculatum (Adder's Tongue), and as usual, now that we knew what it looked like and where to look for it, we were able to find more of it.

Ferns were undoubtedly one of the main features of the whole trip, however, I have agreed to leave their tale. Another find was that strange South Island lancewood Pseudopanax lineare, the adult form of which if not in flower or fruit is almost indistinguishable from adult Pittosporum patulum. Peculiarly, pittosporums seemed to be entirely absent till we crossed the divide and found P.colensoi and P.eugenioides at Quintin hut.

Here also were Aristotelia serrata and A.fructicosa with an amazing family of resultant hybrids. Olearia ilicifolia and O.arborescens had profusions of bloom such as we had not even dreamed of, but the finest show of all was the Hoheria lyallii, east of the divide, and the equally glorious H.glabrata on the west. Determined to be able to identify these two in future I carefully carried one to the other over the pass, got it all worked out and quite satisfied in my own mind, when I looked at another patch and threw all away in disgust, for these were undoubtedly hybrids. It seems to me that these plants of ours are surely created to fool us.

One thing I did prove however, was that H.glabrata trespasses eastward over the divide. Wonderful and glorious as some of these trees and shrubs were, they had to take second place to the alpine on McKinnon Pass. Why didn't I leave Pampolona at daybreak and so have an extra four or five hours in that paradise? Next time I go, (we all want to go again) I'll take my sleeping bag and put the night in up there, but then it would surely rain. The Ranunculus lyallii had finished but I think we had timed our visit to coincide with the maximum splendour. Outstanding were Senecio lyallii, Hebe macrantha, Ourisia macrocarpa, O.macrophylla, O.caespitosa, Euphrasia spp., Ranunculus spp., Wahlenbergias including two plants with quite deep blue flowers, Coprosma pumila not more than 1" high male and female covered with apetalous flowers, Violas, 2 spp. Celmisias in profusion, Leucogenes, Helychrysum, Donatia, Craspedia robusta quite a giant, Raoulias, Bulbinella almost finished flowering, a beautiful almost white

Asplenium foliatum
var. *juvinate*

Wahlenbergia

flowered Carmichaelia and hosts of others. We were sadly handicapped in having no one with much knowledge of the various species, and if time had permitted many more would probably have been found further from the track, particularly in an area pointed out by Mr. Anderson round the side of Mt. Balloon.

I must mention that at Pompolona Hut, Ray the guide, gave us one of the best slide evenings any of us had ever attended. Then our farewell party at Quintin Hut was the best in 18 years according to Mr. Anderson. A brother of a boy, Les Small of Winton, proved to be an efficient leader, he and his party climaxed the night by producing two live kiwis about midnight.

Bird life was really amazing and certainly interested all. Unlike Doubtful Sound there was little evidence of damage done by deer and there are no opossums, nor pigs.

Another problem besides identification of plants that puzzled Mr. Kitchen and myself was the occurrence, both at Quintin and Doubtful, of a few very old squat wide spreading beech with their root systems starting 6' to 10' above present ground level. Because of their heads they had not originally grown in a usual beech forest and so were not likely to have started as epiphytes. Surrounding trees younger but up to 3' diameter were all growing quite naturally. I should say these old giants were up to 6' diameter and growing on the valley floor. At some time several hundred years ago after these trees had become well established, changes in climate, local topography and environment, perhaps sea level, caused severe erosion in their particular locality. This later stopped and allowed beech and other trees to colonise the area. Now when and how did this occur, was it local or did it affect the whole district?

However much I write neither my pen nor perhaps any other could adequately describe or do justice to our Milford trip. Doubtful Sound trip must wait for another edition. Now let me thank every member of the party for their part in making it such an enjoyable occasion. My previous trip two years before was indeed a poor affair, your company made all the difference.

Arthur Farnell.