

## NEWS LETTER

AUCKLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

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It is with some diffidence that I take over the News Letter from Miss Crookes. The high standard she has maintained for 20 years will not be easy to emulate. As one who has done his share of scribbling, I know only too well how much time and effort goes into the apparently artless composition.

Miss Crookes is to be congratulated, not only on her service to the Society as Editor, active member and one time President, but also on her skill as a pteridologist. Her work on the ferns, culminating in the current edition of 'Dobbie', is something to be proud of. Her willingness to encourage the struggling amateur and the youthful enthusiast is something many will recall with gratitude. I still treasure copies of the Matthews manuscript and Nicholls Gems of the Bush, which Miss Crookes gave me in 1944 when she discovered I was taking the orchids seriously, and several times since, she has come to my rescue. Let us hope that her retirement is only a technicality and that she will be with us for many years still to come. E. D. H.

A VISIT TO WAÏPOUA - - - E. M. Davis

We left Auckland in fine weather for Dargaville on Saturday 26 October. At Matakohu, our first stop, we were met by Mr. Stirling, who described the district to us and, from the hill top at Hukatere, showed us a wide uninterrupted view of the surrounding country and of the Kaipara Harbour with its winding channels and devious branches. After lunch we visited a Crown Reserve of some 85 acres, which has been fenced off from stock for 6 or 7 years. There is a representative selection of native trees, kauri, tanekaha, puriri, kahikatea, totara, rimu, Gymnelaea lanceolata, Mida and others, but little intermediate undergrowth, owing no doubt to the depredations of grazing animals. However a wealth of seedlings promises well for the eventual regeneration of the forest.

Some 10 miles south of Dargaville, at Tokatoka, the road runs through salt marshes. Olearia solandri and Coprosma propinqua, with some obvious Coprosma hybrids, share the swamp with Plagianthus divaricatus, flax, cabbage trees and rushes and sedges of great variety. After spending the night at Dargaville, we were the next morning soon on our way to Waipoua.

We paid a short but interesting visit to the State Forest nurseries, where we saw mature kauri grafts on young stock, designed to produce seed at levels low enough to be easily gathered, so that experiments in the growth and development of the young kauri can be carried out. Nearby, totara were in similar stages of growth. Our party divided into two groups at this point. One kept to the main highway, while the other followed an old track, recently reopened, to the west of the main road. Along this track there is an amazing diversity of plant growth in a marked kauri-taraire association. We saw fine groups of mature and very large kauri, particularly on the ridges. Other species observed were tawa, maireaua, Pittosporum tenuifolium, kohekohe, Dracophyllum latifolium and towai. At lower levels the sub-association includes pukatea with its characteristic buttress roots. Metrosideros albiflora ( very beautiful in flower ), towai, Lophomyrtus bullata, Ackama rosaefolia, Geniostoma, Alseuosmia macrophylla, Senecio kirkii ( some still in flower ) rooted in the ground and only occasionally epiphytic, Coprosmas of various species, Mida salicifolia, Pseudowintera axillaris, kahikatea, pigeonwood, white and black maire, Helicope simplex and Helicytus reniflorus. Rewarewa is abundant on the ridges. At ground level Gahnia xanthocarpa flourishes together with Astelia trinervia. Small colonies of Blechnum fraseri are common. The chief ground orchids seen were Pterostylis banksii.

Epiphytes occur in great numbers. Griselinia lucida often envelops the upper part of its support. Tmesipteris tannensis and Lycopodium varium were identified. Many filmy ferns grow on the mossy trunks of trees. Marina mucronata, Dendrobium cunninghamii and Astelia solandri are abundant, and Metrosideros robusta continues to strangle its support with its downward growing roots. Pittosporum cornifolium also occurs. In many places kiekie and supplejack sprawl with lazy abandon. Mangemange, Metrosideros fulgens and clematis ( some still in flower ) are amongst the climbers. Groves of nikau and tangles of bushlawyer are common. Several kauri snails were found in this area also. Juvenile forms of Dacrydium kirkii were identified with, in two cases, the parent tree nearby. Occasionally large rimu, miro and totara occur, the last named having very characteristic transverse incisions in the bark, and the odd kawaka appears.

Reaching higher ground we passed through a transition stage between heavy forest and open heath. On the edge of the forest are larger trees such as towai, Ackama, rewarewa, Olearia rani, Leptospermum ericoides, a few young totara, Alseuosmia, Ixerba, Quintinia, and Persoonia toru, these last two with most brilliantly coloured leaves. As the heath opens out smaller shrubs are common, teatree, Senecio kirkii, Epacris pauciflora

( in flower ), ningimingi, Astelia trinervia with reddish purple leaves, Gahnia species, bracken and umbrella fern. Lycopodium deuterodensum, cernuum and volubile are present, Drosera auriculata and binata, Thelymitra and numerous lichens and mosses. Persoonia toru is here a tree of some size. The area was surprisingly dry, but showed obvious signs of becoming a bog at times. From the heath the track descends into the forest again, and passes back through the kauri-tarairé association, finally coming out on to the highway. One notices the great mounds of reddish-brown humus round the trunks of the kauri, formed by decaying fallen bark and building up to a considerable height. Numerous seedlings grow in it, and there is always the hopeful climber, which is however, soon shed with the bark.

This is but a brief summary of what was observed, for in an area so diversified it is impossible to list everything.

On the highway we joined forces with the first group and were soon back in the bus and on the return journey to Dargaville. Next day we stopped again at Matakōhe, where Mr. Stirling showed us the Centennial Museum, which has a very fine collection of photographs illustrating the history and growth of the district in general, and the kauri timber industry in particular. Tools and implements ranging from Maori artifacts to early household utensils, once part and parcel of the life of the early settlers, are tangible evidence of the changes the years have brought. After a visit to the Coates Memorial Church and lunch at the Memorial Hall, we spent a brief half hour in Stirling Park which contains kauri, rimu, tanekaha, totara, mapau, lida and other trees of some size. Undergrowth is already regenerating now that the area has been enclosed, and it will be interesting to note the development within the next few years. Our thanks are due to Mr. Stirling for his kindness in showing us so much of the district

All too soon we were back in Auckland with vivid memories of the great groves of cabbage trees seen so frequently along the northern roads where they descend to level land; the little pockets of bush left here and there in the fields and valleys; the totaras large and small, that are so much a feature of northern farmlands; the vivid colours of the leaves of mairehau, toru and Quintinia on the heath; the lovely white flowers of Metrosideros albiflora; the dappled blue-grey of the kauri trunks and the intense silence that pervades the depths of the forest.

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Mr. Warren tells me he also found Decrydium colensoi near the group of D.kirkii mentioned by Miss Davis above. E.D.H.

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