

Myriophyllum propinquum ? (In flower)
 Potamogeton cheesemanii (In flower)
 " natans ? with larger leaves.

Our thanks are due to the leader of the party, Mr. Warren,
 for a very pleasant outing.

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KOPU - HIKUAI ROAD ----- 27th January 1969

A full bus of enthusiasts set off on January 27th for the popular annual long day trip of the Society. The day was perfect and we were going to botanise on the Kopu - Hikuai road, cut through beautiful bush over the Colville Ranges.

Turning off at Pokeno, we passed over the plains, miles wide, now prosperous farms drained from the cabbage tree swamps of thirty or more years ago. I looked for a sign of the cabbage trees and saw one clump only left. After taking the Kopu turnoff we were soon in the low hills, steep country clothed in scrub and regenerating native bush, with the pyramidal rewarewas predominating. The towai was flowering and some trees showed up quite red with the new seed heads. Soon we came to the heavy bush and had a short stop to see a large old rata, the roots of which divided to form an arch. It was festooned with masses of Dendrobium cunninghamii in full bloom, as well as many other epiphytes.

Further on a rest area is provided, with parking space, tables and seats. Here we had a cuppa and an hour to browse over a small reserve and look-out. Those responsible for choosing this area for preservation surely knew their native botany, as, for a small area, there was so very much to see: Neopanax colensoi, Neopanax laetum, Neopanax arboreum and a large number of Pseudopanax discolor, one adorned with a beautiful dragon-fly, fully four inches long, with a fluffy head like a bumble-bee. Mairehau, Phabalium nudum, was fairly plentiful and toropapa, Alseuosmia quercifolia, which earlier had been a mass of very dark red sweetly scented flowers, was also common. Only one specimen of kauri was noticed. Another surprise was Pittosporum huttonianum with the white tomentum on the undersides of the young leaves. Ixerba brexioides was there with its companion tree, Quintinia elliptica, also Placocarpus dentatus, Corokia buddleioides and a pretty purple Hebe macrocarpa. What a collection for Aucklanders, in one small area! At the summit, an easy walk, a direction finder was placed on the floor of the trig. It was as well that I didn't have to find my way home alone as my sense of direction would have taken me to Wellington, not Auckland. A fine view was obtained of the surrounding bush and hills. Wandering down the path, we came to a delightful little stream, which tumbled over a steep rock face to the bush below. We next walked down the road a short distance and entered the bush by a well defined track, perhaps an old bridle track to Tairua, lined with Fuchsia and Wineberry. On the hills there were many old hoary trees of tawa,

rata and rimu but we did not meet up with any of the unusual trees we had seen in the look-out reserve. A strange sight was a Coprosma australis entirely stripped of leaves but with masses of ripe fruit left - presumably the work of opossums.

Returning to the road, we explored a small stream where the rock hounds were delighted to find many pieces of red jasper on the stream bed. The botanists were interested in the wealth of ferns: Todea hymenophylloides, Hypolepis rugosula, and Blechnum spp. On returning to the bus we took the homeward road but soon stopped at a reserve which was surrounded by a semi-circular track. Here we saw Litsea calicaris, Laurelia novae-zelandiae, Elaeocarpus dentatus, Beilschmiedia tawa and Quintinia elliptica. On the track back to the bus the brown orchid Orthoceras strictum, was found.

We left the Kopu road and its glorious bush and wended our way homeward over the Waihou River with its acres of mangroves on its western bank, on to Waitakaruru and along the coast of the Firth, with Thames nestling under the hills on our right. Then past Miranda, with a stop at Kaiawa for a refreshingly cool drink and a glimpse of seashore plants such as Plagianthus divaricatus and Salicornia australis, and on inland to the Te Morehu reserve. Here we had our tea under a spreading towai tree in flower, with bushes of heketara and akepiro across the road, both white with blooms. A quick glance at the bush in the reserve to see the beautiful beech trees revealed a dozen or more fantails busily engaged enjoying their evening meal of moths we were disturbing and cheekily asking for more.

At 6.20 p.m. we left for Auckland, enjoying the drive through the farmlands and by lovely Kawakawa Bay in the peace of the early evening, on to Clevedon and then back to the bustle of the city.

A good day to remember, so full of interest and variety. Aucklanders are indeed fortunate to have so many areas of bush to explore and enjoy. May we do our part to help preserve it in its wilderness state for those who come after us. Many thanks to our leaders who planned and organised such a perfect outing for our Society.

M.H.