

gathered at the farmhouse we carried, by acclamation, a vote of thanks to Mr. Mitchell for his help in guiding us and his permission to wander over his farm.

At 3.50 p.m. we left for home after a most enjoyable day.

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MOUNT AUCKLAND.

19th September.

Miss. D.C. Bagmall.

About 25 of the party decided to do the longer walk over fields and through higher bush to the top of Mount Auckland, 994' above sea level. After leaving the rest of the party we continued through the bush for a short while until we reached the open fields. This part of the bush was similar to what we had already been through. It was all very beautiful, with an abundance of ferns of many types and a large number of Kowhai, all in full flower.

After a steady climb across the fields we came to a ridge, where all were very ready for the lunch stop. On arriving there, two things caught our attention: firstly a rewarewa with the flowers almost out and then a fat pigeon sitting on a branch just a few yards away from us. He seemed very tame and quite unconcerned at the sudden invasion of his privacy. We had the choice of a sheltered place in the sun, just below the path, or a shady place above with a breeze coming through the trees. We were now about 300' above sea level and from our lunch spot looked across a huge natural amphitheatre, dotted with several fine specimens of cabbage trees, to the large area of bushland, through part of which we had just come. It was more colourful than usual, with the large numbers of kowhais in flower and also an occasional bunch of clematis high up in the trees. Towering above the other trees were a number of large kauris.

Fortified by our meal, we set off on the remaining six or seven hundred foot climb, fortunately without our packs which we were able to leave at the lunch spot as we were to return by the same route. After a further climb of two or three hundred feet in the open, we reached another fence and again entered the reserve. Then followed a very interesting and quite energetic climb to the trig station.

The bush is very rich in flora, many varieties being noted beside the track. A very pleasing feature was the large amount of undergrowth, with a great number of seedlings, particularly kowhai, karaka and nikau. No grazing has been allowed since 1947, which has accounted for the noticeable increase in undergrowth. Several orchids were found, including some fine examples of Pterostylis banksii, Pterostylis montana var. rubricaulis, Corybas trilobus and Earina mucronata - there was one glorious Earina with flowers fully out, hanging from a nikau palm. There were koromiko and mingi-mingi in flower, also a number of Alseuosmia bushes, some beginning to flower. Some of us saw for the first time our native iris, Libertia, a pretty white three-petalled flower similar in shape to the larger blue Australian Iris.

Mr. Beever told us that many samples of Libertia had been sent to Dr. Moore for positive identification. Carmichaelia, red matipo, pigwood, young lancewood, kohuhu, a small-leaved Pittosporum were also noted and several small-leaved milk trees, which are quite uncommon at this altitude (600-700'). We also saw a green clematis, Clematis parviflora, which unfortunately was not in flower. Lycopodium billardieri was found at about 600'.

There was a wide variety of trees including kawakawa, totara, kahikatea, miro, titoki, puriri (including one huge specimen covered with epiphytes, which was maybe the old man of the forest), whau, putaputaweta, tawa and taraire.

The climb was not too difficult and with plenty of different plants to see, the occasional singing of a tui or a grey warbler to listen to and, on two or three occasions, a glimpse of the wide and winding Kaipara River below us, we were able to proceed at a steady rate without noticing the climb too much. Nearing the top we came to a steep cut through the hill which formed part of the Maori fortifications, and from then on we walked through large clumps of flax, Phormium tenax, thought to have been planted by the Maoris when they used Mt. Auckland as a fort.

From the top of the hill there was an extensive view, reaching from the Tangihua Range, between Whangarei and Dargaville in the north, to Great Barrier and part of the Coromandels, with the Kaipara River and flats spread out closer at hand. We could see clearly Little Barrier and the Hen and Chickens, with a glimpse of the Whangarei Heads, and could pick out the Brynderwyns and a rounded hill near Whangarei which we decided would be Maungatapere or Maunu Mountain - most likely the former. No one seemed anxious to set off down, for it was so pleasant and interesting on the summit, however, we had a bus to catch and so set off on the return journey, very happy, refreshed by the physical exertions and clean, pure air, and with a sense of achievement that we had been to the summit.

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The following is an account of the trip as seen by those who didnt do the climb to the summit. - Ed.

The remainder of the party, after a leisurely lunch in the bush, followed the left hand bank of the stream until the ground commenced to rise more steeply. They then crossed the stream and returned to the farm by the other bank. Although they missed the rarer flora to be found on the summit track, there was still sufficient in the bush to make their ramble a pleasure. In addition to the common trees and shrubs, they observed a number of juvenile Carmichaelia aligera with their dainty leaflets, and quite a few orchids. The latter included Earina mucronata, Pterostylis banksii, P. graminea and P. trullifolia, all in flower, Acianthus fornicatus var. sinclairii in seed and Bulbophyllum pygmaeum. Of the ferns seen, that of most interest was Athyrium japonicum, which was quite plentiful.

This account would not be complete without reference to the kindness of Mrs. Beever and the Brunskill family in providing us with a very welcome afternoon tea on our return to the farm. We must also express our thanks to Mr. Brunskill for allowing us to walk over his paddocks and climb his fences.

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As this is the last issue of the Newsletter this year, I would like to wish all our members pleasant summer holidays. Please spare us a thought and put pen to paper if you see anything unusual in the botanical line.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those members who have contributed articles over the past year. There is nothing worse than being the editor of a magazine and also having to write all the copy yourself! Fortunately I haven't had to do this as yet and, with your help, I hope that this state will continue.

A.D.P.

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