

OUR EAST COAST TRIP

On Thursday, 25th. January, our bus having picked up 40 souls, we arrived at Mangere and were soon aboard our Friendship and on our way to Napier. It was a beautiful summer morning, the early morning mists not being sufficient to spoil our views of the Waikato River, the Mount at Tauranga, Mt. Edgecumbe, the lakes about Rotorua, Lake Taupo, Ruapehu, Egmont and the razor-sharp ridges of the Kaimanawas. There was little delay on arriving at Napier, where we met our driver, Mr. Cyril Drake, of Newmans Coach Tours, who whisked us off to the Masonic Hotel for a breakfast which all were eagerly awaiting, having had no time for a meal before leaving town.

A visit to Marineland to see the performance by the dolphins delighted all. This is something that should not be missed by anyone visiting Napier. Then followed a drive in the bus about Napier, during which we called at the Botanic Gardens and the lookout on Bluff Hill, from which superb views of the city, the port and the coastline were gained.

After lunch our driver, who was a mine of information, took us out to Hastings, Havelock North, Te Mata and other places in the vicinity, where we saw paddocks of maize, tomatoes, asparagus and other crops, most of which would find their way to Watties canneries. All this was not exactly of botanical interest, but it was very entertaining to a party of tired members who had perforce to rise very early in the morning.

Friday was another beautiful, sunny day when we went out to Cape Kidnappers to see the gannets. We travelled in what appeared to be four-wheel drive army trucks. Probably nothing else could stand up to the rough track which we pursued up and down hill through paddocks and dry watercourses, passing through a multitude of gates, all of which had to be opened and then shut again to prevent stock from wandering. But what a ride! Bone shaking and exciting hardly describes it. And the gannets when we reached the Cape! What a fantastic sight! There were two separate colonies, many hundreds in each colony. Everybody seemed to agree that they were fully compensated by the sight of these beautiful birds for the roughness and expense of the ride. The afternoon was free, most finding some place of interest to visit.

Saturday was again sunny and hot when we set out for Gisborne. The first stop was at quite a nice little patch of bush known as the White Pine Reserve. Of the flora there, the two species best remembered are some fine kahikatea and a quantity of Urtica ferox. It was regretted by many that we did not have time to explore the bush properly.

The next short stop was at Lake Tutira, a well known bird sanctuary, where we observed many black swan and ducks.

On reaching the Mohaka viaduct, the photographers were all keen to get a pictorial record of this remarkable structure, so we obliged them.

Continuing our journey, it was not long before we reached Wairoa where, on the banks of the river, we enjoyed a very tasty lunch

provided by the hotel at Napier, entertained meanwhile by speed boats dashing up and down the river, towing water skiers under the traffic bridge.

At Moreere Hot Springs we were delighted to find more native bush. Some went to the hot pools, where the temperature of the water was found to be somewhat higher than anticipated. The bush, which is a Scenic Reserve, had quite a good variety of plants, but nothing of a rare nature. There were some very good titokis and a horopito.

Gisborne was reached in good time for dinner.

Sunday, 28th. January.

L.W. Butler.

Another fine day and, after breakfast, we boarded the bus to do a local tour. After visiting the Public Relations Office, where we absorbed a lot of local knowledge, we travelled round some of the lesser used streets and saw a few points of interest. We then crossed one of the rivers and went a short distance along another, then turned up into hilly country to a private residence owned by Mrs. Redstone. This property had a beautifully kept garden containing a great variety of both exotic and native plants, even a young kauri. After about an hour there we left and went to the other side of Gisborne to Waiti Hill, at the base of which is a Statue of Captain Cook at the place where he landed. We called in, at the start of the hill, at the Poho-o-Rawiri, reputed to be the largest Maori meeting house in New Zealand.

We then went up the hill to the lookout point, which is situated above the harbour and gives a fascinating view of the city and the whole of Poverty Bay. Back through the city to Ormond Rd. and along it for about six miles to Grey's Bush, where we had lunch under the trees. After lunch we entered a patch of bush consisting of a few acres. The dominant trees were kahikatea (Podocarpus dacrydioides), some of them very large specimens. Amongst others we saw several giant kohekohe (Dysoxylum spectabile), puriris (Vitex lucens), matai (Podocarpus spicatus), a very large Parsonsia heterophylla 2 to 3" diameter with large leaves and also a mass of small leaves looking very like Dendrobium, and numerous titokis (Alectryon excelsum). Among the smaller plants were juvenile kaikomako (Pernantia corymbosa), Melicytus micranthus, Paratrophis microphylla, which was in abundance, not many small Coprosmas but plenty of australis, lucida and robusta, rangiora (Brachyglottis repanda), heketara (Olearia rani), large rikaus and Fuchsia excorticata. It is a pity that there is not more bush in this part of the country.

From the bush we went a couple of miles to Waihirere Reserve, but there were so many people there we decided to return to Gisborne via another road. We passed a house built of the remains of the "Star of Canada" which was wrecked here a number of years ago. We finished up at Waikanee Beach where several of us had a very nice dip in the Pacific before returning to the Hotel. In all we had an interesting and not too strenuous day.

Monday, 29th. January. - Waikaremoana.

J.B.

This had two distinct sections, the trip from Gisborne to the lake area and return, and the time in the bush at the lake.

It was interesting to note the types of plants, especially trees, that settlers had planted while replacing native vegetation with grass. Near farm houses, as well as fruit trees, walnuts and horse chestnuts seemed more common than in the Auckland area. Most striking were the red-flowering gums which, both in Gisborne and right out in the country, brought a brilliant orange-red splash of colour not often seen here. Their colours seemed more intense than those we are used to.

On the roadsides poplars were very common, often apparently planted to hold banks from slipping. The larger poplar (Populus canescens or P. nigra) seemed very useful, but the white poplar (Populus alba) appeared to grow so profusely that it was virtually a noxious weed. Suckers appeared everywhere and much cutting of it along roadsides had recently been done. Lombardy poplars were common in the Tiniroto valley, lending a pleasant appearance to this well grassed valley. Other exotics noted were the locust trees (Acacia sp.), many willows, birch, sycamore and eucalypts.

From the coast until we reached the first power station at Piripaua native bush occurred only in sporadic and small clumps of scrub, often in gullies. Grass covered much of the hills and aerial top-dressing has produced the higher quality of pasture. Nearing Waikaremoana, however, we noted some examples of serious erosion where gullying had destroyed all vegetation on whole hill faces.

The pockets of native plants were largely what would be expected, tea tree especially L. ericoides, Fuchsia, five finger, tutu, karamu and koromiko, which last was often on papa faces. Bracken was not common except near Te Reinga. Less well known to us were Pittosporum ralphii, Hoheria sexstylosa, large leaved kowhai (Sophora tetraptera) and mountain flax (P. cookianum). Occasionally a small stand of kahikatea, with or without totara, remained, saved somehow from the saws that sent so many others to Britain as butter boxes.

After passing Piripaua the bush closed in on us and, from Tuai to the Park Headquarters at the Aniwanui Falls, we were in thick bush. The spectacular Panekiri Bluff with the lake below were the features that first drew our attention, but soon we were noticing details and, when we stopped for lunch at the Urewera National Park Headquarters, we had time to explore some of the tracks before turning for home at 2 p.m. The track here goes along the Aniwanui stream, and the waterfalls as it drops towards the lake are very fine. The upper fall is in two parts, Momakahi on one side and the Bridal Veil Falls on the other. Below, both join to form "Te Tangi o Hinerau" ( the tears of Hinerau ) Falls.

The easiest way to describe our brief observations is to note the differences from the Waitakere bush. Missing of course were kauri and taraire, but the beeches (silver beech, N. menziesii and red beech, N. fusca), tawa, kamahi and rata (Metrosideros robusta) formed, with the

familiar podocarps, the majority of the large trees. Other seed plants noted as less commonly seen near Auckland were Criselinia littoralis, horopito, toatoa, neinei (Dracophyllum latifolium) and Coprosma foetidissima. Tawari (Ixerba brexioides) was there in plenty just ready to flower, accompanied as usual by tawheowheo (Quintinia serrata). This must be nearing the southern limit for these two plants as "a little south of 38 degrees" is given in most books. Particularly interesting were three small-leaved shrubs which proved a test for those trying to identify them. They were Pseudopanax ancmalum, Meliccytus micranthus and Coprosma parviflora. Neopanax simplex was present as was N. simplex var. sinclairii. The Olearia rani we saw puzzled some of us as its leaves were slimmer than usual, being about 2.5cm by 10cm.

The lake shores have been exposed since 1947 by the permanent lowering of the lake level for hydro-electric purposes, and the most noticeable change in vegetation is on the very large flat area in some bays, where old swampy stream mouths have become dry and covered with tceotce.

Ferns seen were Microsorium diversifolium and M. novae-zelandiae, Blechnum discolor and Blechnum vulcanicum, Hypolepis rugosula, Leptopteris hymenophylloides, Asplenium bulbiferum, Polystichum sylvaticum and P. richardii, Leptolepia novae-zelandiae, and finally an easily identified specimen of Dicksonia fibrosa complete with masses of drooping dead fronds and a thick fibrous trunk, labelled by the Park Board Cyathea smithii !! The ranger at the headquarters did not seem interested in the error. Motto: don't believe all labels in a national park.

Tuesday, 30th. January.

Beautiful weather once again. We first paid a visit to the Botanic Gardens, where there is a good collection of trees from abroad. Unfortunately the gardens are in a state of reconstruction, but nevertheless we found much of interest. Then followed a visit to a fine garden and orchard owned by a Mr. Gray. The orchard contained avocado pears of various kinds, Mr. Gray kindly giving us information about each. A free afternoon gave many an opportunity to look over the local museum.

Wednesday, 31st. January.

Our last day, again favoured with perfect weather. After seeing Tolaga Bay and Tokomaru Bay, we continued to Te Puia, where hot springs arise from the earth, forming a small stream which flows down to baths formed behind the hotel there. Mine host very kindly invited us to bring the bus into the grounds and have our lunch on the lawns, locking the gate to give us privacy. Later he allowed our members to have a free dip in the swimming pool, which had been cleaned and was re-filling. It was a very pleasant spot.

On returning to Gisborne we cleaned up after our journey, had dinner, and went out to the aerodrome. A perfect flight via Whakatane and

Paeroa brought us back to Mangere and Shears Coachlines bus for our short trip to the city and home.

FEBRUARY 1973.

WAIKATO HEADS.

Miss E.M. DAVIS.

It was a bright sunny morning when we set out for the Waikato Heads. The countryside showed evidence of the dry weather of the past few months, the fields in particular looking very parched. At Papakura we made a detour to Red Hill to visit Puketikikiwi Pa, an old Maori stronghold. We walked through the bush reserve and up the steep winding track leading to the summit. Conspicuous amongst the trees and shrubs were some very old, gnarled, puriris. From the comparatively flat extensive surface at the top there is a commanding view of the surrounding country. This with the steep approaches, one side almost a perpendicular rock face, provides ample evidence of the care with which the site was chosen long years ago to serve its purpose as a look-out, a defence post and a refuge against hostile invaders.

We continued on our way to Alexandra Redoubt, once again a carefully selected site on the right bank of the Waikato River, a short distance from the present Tuakau Bridge. In those days of July 1863 it was garrisoned by British troops of the 65th. Regiment with the intention of protecting General Camerons right flank, and ensuring the safe passage of the river steamships carrying the supplies essential for his Waikato campaign. The headstones in the small cemetery record amongst others the names of soldiers who lost their lives in action at this time. From the Redoubt there is an extensive view over the river and its environs. How different that view is today from what it must have been one hundred years ago.

It was in the shade of the trees in the reserve here that we had lunch. The bush is very similar to that at Red Hill. There are some very fine specimens of Leptospermum ericoides (kanuka) and, in addition, Dacrydium cupressinum (rimu), Podocarpus ferrugineus (miro), P. totara, Phyllocladus trichomanoides (tanekaha), Pseudopanax crassifolium (lancewood) in all stages of growth, Knightia excelsa (rewarewa), Litsea calicularis (mangeao), Myrsine australis (matipo), Coprosma lucida, C. spathulata, C. areolata, C. arborea, Brachyglottis repanda (rangiora) and a flourishing growth of seedlings which provides evidence of regeneration in the area.

After a short stay we went on to the Waikato Heads, passing by cultivated river flats, areas of swamp with stands of raupo and, near the coast, salt mud flats with their flourishing groves of mangroves, at that stage of tide almost covered by the sea. It was at the Heads that the Reverend Maunsell had his mission station. Except for the site nothing is left of this now but, in the years 1840-50, it was a