

SOME CHANGES AT HUIAMrs. K. WOOD

Since the lower Huia dam was completed a few years ago several changes have taken place. The dam overflows for only a short time in the spring, so most of the time the stream below becomes just a trickle fed by one or two side streams, but twice a day the tides fill it as far as the swing bridge. Previously I had never seen mangroves at Huia, but now a small group is growing in a muddy backwater beside the Huia dam road. These were first noticed by Lloyd Esler on 31.12.73 and they are still flourishing.

Just past the the dam gates on the left of the track, there used to be a small swamp where Baumea huttonii grew but with the filling in of this area these plants have disappeared. The white flowered poroporo, Solanum aviculare var. albiflorum was so disturbed by the dam building operations that it has also gone from the hillside by the spillway. Carex pumila used to grow on the shore at the mouth of the stream but the tides have washed away this area of ground. Pampas and kikuyu grass have invaded Huia within the last decade, two species of ginger plant grow on the roadsides, and arum lilies are still fairly plentiful in spite of being "tidied" away from many areas which are now mown.

1975 OUTINGSJ. BEEVERD.S.I.R. - 15th. March

This time we broke with our custom of getting out of town and spent the morning at the D.S.I.R. Research Station at Mt. Albert. Here, by courtesy of the Director, we were able to look at some of the more interesting plants in the grounds and have a brief glance at some of the botanical work being done in the laboratories. Our tour was conducted by two of the scientists from the Research Station, Mr Stuart Dawes and Dr Ross Beever who had both already spoken to the society during the last two years.

First Ross took us for a general tour, beginning with the beeches at the entrance. Here an interesting group of Nothofagus species from various southern hemisphere countries allowed a comparison of closely related species from places now very far apart. How did they spread so far?

Then on down to the car park, where our attention was drawn among other items to Cordyline baueri, the Norfolk Island cabbage

tree with pale blue fruit and broad leaves. This showed certain similarities to Cordyline kasper which we saw a little further on. C. kasper comes from the Three Kings Islands and is not yet well known in New Zealand but is now available from nurserymen. Its broad leaves and sturdy trunk distinguish it from C. australis, but the similarity to the Norfolk Island species and the fact that the Auckland and Northland C. australis varieties are wider leaved than the N.Z. average suggests some connection of all three species in the not too distant past.

A tree with leaves like broad rewarewa leaves proved to be a Macadamia. This is a Queensland native now grown extensively in Hawai and California as a commercial crop, producing very hard shelled nuts which have a very pleasant flavour.

Other plants in this area were Xeronema callistemon, which in late spring has brilliant red brush like flowers; and Elingamita johnsonii, another Three Kings tree which is rarely seen outside special gardens.

Stuart Dawes, who last year intrigued us with his slides and lecture about Central and South American plants for our orchards and gardens, showed us some of his present plants under test. Probably of most interest were the Pepinos, which when selected for the best strains should provide a very tasty new plant for our gardens. Also the Naranjilla, from the Solanum family, which looks like a rather prickly leaved rangiora and produces orange-like fruit for juice purposes. It could be the basis for a fruit juice industry.

To complete the morning we had a quick look through some of the labs on the top floor of the Hamilton Building and a glance at the work on plant physiology being done there.

After lunching in secluded spots in the grounds we drove to the Centennial Scenic Drive where we spent a short time looking at the Park Information Centre and the nature trails now being set up there. Then on to Spragg's Bush, where a circular track took us through fairly typical Waitakere bush with a couple of large kauris and brought our varied day to a close.

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#### FLAT BUSH AND TOTARA PARK - 21st. June

Flat Bush east of Papatoetoe was new to most of us and proved to be an interesting remnant of kahikatea bush which is now preserved as a reserve and should develop and thicken up as time passes. It appears to have been grazed as part of a farm and the eastern areas especially have very light undergrowth, but new small plants are now developing well. As in the case of Miller's Bush at Warkworth, we append a list of species for comparison with lists of later visitors to gauge what changes are brought about by exclusion of cattle etc.

The area as its name implies lies in a wide flat valley and must have once been a typical example of the kahikatea bush which supplied such a vast quantity of white pine for New Zealand