

MT. ARTHUR AREAMrs G. Bedford

This was a trip I will remember for the grasses. They were superb and flowering extravagantly - the Poas were enchanting and the tussocks magnificent. Chionochloa conspicua 5 feet high growing in abundance along the Flora stream near the hut where we spent two nights were a glorious sight, with dozens of spreading pale gold plumes. The Celmisia to take the prize and the dominant one, was C. dallii - the heavy bold flowers 12" high. By Lake Peel, Acaena hirsutula, blue-leaved, and A. saccaticarpula with bright red spines trailing everywhere. On Mt. Peel were acres of yellow Gentians in full flower, a carpet in Heaven. We were caught in thick mist and heavy rain and had to carefully skirt where we thought the lake was, and gingerly pick our way down the mountainside where Aciphylla ferox grew only too thickly, a very handsome olive green plant with golden flowers and many bayonet spines. In the gullies huge plants of A. glaucescens 4' across, but very few with tall golden flowers. This is something I have observed over many years - the irregularity with which so many alpine plants flower, hence all the more reason to protect them. Myosotis macrantha was in plenty on rocky ledges, with its strange brown flowers.

The screens are exciting but terrifying as I have no head for heights, but the plants spur me on! Cheesemania latesiliqua, a fine rosette plant with long parsnip root, Notothlaspi rosulatum, the fascinating Hebe ciliolata only found high and growing in rock crevices and apparently existing on nothing - one in flower to prove it was a Hebe. Epilobium chloraeifolium, tall and quite red, smaller E. glabellum a lovely plant, and another beauty E. vernicosum, a stouter plant, all with innocent beautiful flowers, and several guileless Gentians - G. patula, G. filipes. The whole slope seemed held together by flat spreading plants of Senecio adamsii, shining leaved and yellow flowered with a very strong central trunk which gave much needed support to climb the vertical slope. Also S. bidwillii; both these Senecios very unusual and attractive - loathe captivity - when one sees how and where they grow it is not difficult to understand.

I went down Flora stream through the tall Chionochloa conspicua and saw a breathtaking sight - Olearia lacunosa in full flower. It is one of our finest small trees and I have seen it overhanging Iron stream, near Lake Sylvester, with long narrow leaves all of 12" long with marked ladder-like venation. It was very plentiful and I saw several in flower, but none as magnificent as down Flora stream.

We tramped 7 miles to Salisbury Hut, through beech forest with many giant red beech, Nothofagus fusca. I relished every moment of it, even the return when it poured with rain and the trickles of waterfalls we had stepped over on the way up were raging torrents to be crossed with care. Flora stream was roaring along, the rocks grinding: the airy beech trees, bright green lichen and many deep mosses over logs and stones created a gnome forest.

Mt. Arthur is limestone and has many special plants - it was full of sink holes in which were delightful gardens, sometimes Ranunculus insignis 2" high in flower and Celmisias and Epilobiums. In an open area near the top was Epilobium margaretae, a tiny flat plant with many long red seed pods. Another intriguing plant was a flat cushion one yard across of Anisotome imbricata, mainly found much further south. I was also very fortunate to see Poranthera alpina, a neat cushion in full flower.

A very wonderful area, thankfully unlikely to become over popular because of the considerable effort required in getting there.

A DAY IN THE WAITAKERES WITH MISS CROOKES

On a greyish but fine morning a busload of 28 members headed for a day in the Waitakeres with Sharp's Bush and Walker's Track as their objective, but when the bus drew up in Mountain Road we were told we were invited to have morning tea with Miss Crookes at her bush-surrounded home looking out over folds of the ranges and across the upper harbour, and afar to the harbour and Rangitoto. What an unexpected treat for everyone and certainly we not only enjoyed the views but did more than justice to the tea and excellent home-made pikelets.

We then found that Miss Crookes was to be the leader for the day and we all set out to follow in her footsteps along Sharp's Bush Track. After a very wet winter the track was in surprisingly good order and before long we were all busy observing a fine assortment of plants and ferns, and exclaiming over large patches of the orchid Pterostylis alobula in flower and marvelling at the tiny Bulbophyllum pygmaeum which grows on the eastern sides of kauri trunks. Other orchids seen were Acianthus fornicatus var. sinclairii and Acianthus reniformis, as well as the epiphytic bunches of Earina autumnalis and E. mucronata. The red drupes of Nertera dichondraefolia made attractive ground mats and Lycopodium volubile twisted gracefully through the undergrowth.

After our picnic lunch we set out on the Walker's Bush Track where there are two large specimen kauri trees of noble proportions, one of them shading the resting place of the ashes of the late W.R. Walker after whom the track was named. Two plants along this track were of special interest - a Kirk's daisy, Senecio kirkii, growing as an epiphyte and also in flower, and Pittosporum cornifolium which, contrary to its usual epiphytic habit, was growing as a bush and looking very handsome with its shining black seeds ringed by the reddish-orange capsule valves.

This track proved to be quite a treasure house of ferns, the following species being seen:- Anarthropteris lanceolata, Asplenium lucidum, A. flaccidum and A. falcatum, Blechnum capense,