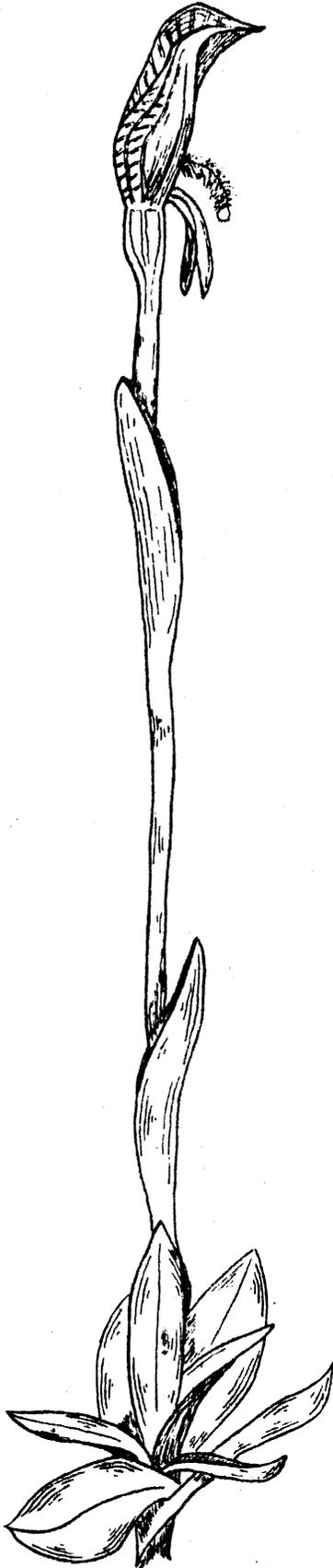


PTEROSTYLIS PLUMOSA (BARBATA) IN THE CORNWALLIS AREA

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Fifty years ago the manuka scrub on the Cornwallis gumland was very much shorter than it is at present, often no more than knee-high, and was scattered through with quite large patches of bare yellow clay. The tracks were kept open and the firebreaks between the pines systematically ploughed. This freshly-turned soil was a favourite germinating place for Pterostylis plumosa, and there is in AK a specimen which I collected from Mill Bay in October 1932.

It is worth mentioning here that this species does not reproduce by multiple tubers and spreads only by seed. It is also very dependent on mycorrhiza and cannot be cultivated with any success. If you should find it - leave it be.

The Kaitarakihi peninsula was another area which was largely bare clay, and was often burnt over, deliberately or by accident I cannot now remember. Pterostylis plumosa was frequent here too, but tended to disappear as the scrub grew taller, and was particularly choked out by the fern Gleichenia dicarpa. P. plumosa was last recorded from here by Mrs Katie Wood (Auck.Bot. Soc. Newsletter Sept. 1951, p.3). Recent clearing by the ARA has produced some suitably bare soil and I was pleased a few weeks back to find 2 plants of plumosa about 3 seasons old, with well-developed seed capsules. The peninsula is open to the Tasman and the south-west wind and the seed may have re-arrived from Australia, or may have come from some hidden local source.

Four days after I made this discovery someone had dug up the larger plant, leaving a neat trowel-hole, and trampled the second plant (apparently not noticed) into the ground. So much for conservation in public parks.

Since clearing began on Kaitarakihi there has been a noticeable increase in the number of plants of Thelymitra carnea and Caladenia catenata var. calliniger. Prasophyllum pumilum on the other hand, appears to be decreasing. In 1958 I recorded 26 flowering plants, in 1983 only 1.