

spread their linen out to dry on the shrubby knots in their own small square gardens. The floral clock at Edinburgh is doubtless a descendant of the Elizabethan knot gardens. Elizabethan knot gardens were mainly made up of shrubs because flowers were few, and mainly spring flowers, at least in the early Elizabethan period. This explains the real meaning of the old nursery song "Here we come gathering nuts in May". The word "nuts" is really a corruption of "knots". Knots of May were really knots of spring flowers gathered from the fields by old custom on May Day. The Queen went gathering knots of May at Lewisham the year before she died.

Elizabethan knot gardens were knotted with perennial shrubs ranging in colour from silver to green, box and black yew which when laid out in designs and patterns gave the Elizabethan garden both its winter interest and its summer delight.

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#### TAWHAI GROVE

By Anthony Holcroft

In 1850 Charlotte Godley wrote of Oxford, in North Canterbury: "It is a very pretty place, from the beauty of the woods, which are very extensive and run down over the hills, leaving patches of grass, so as to look just like fine park scenery". Those woods, with their luxuriant glades of fern have long since vanished, of course; yet something of the sylvan character of early Oxford lingers still in the remnants of beech scattered over the foothills. They enhance the surrounding farmland with a park-like character that is visually stimulating. Sadly, though, most are in bad shape, and must sooner or later disappear if not properly cared for.

At the beginning of 1976 we purchased one such remnant in a small valley about 5 miles west of Oxford. There was a variety in the 19 ha site which appealed to us. On the eastern boundary, below a dry slope covered chiefly in broom, a shingly stream flows beside an extensive swamp of native rushes. At one time there grew here a fine stand of kahikatea. One tree, presumably a sapling when the trees were milled, still stands. When we first walked over the swamp, the rushes were chewed down by cattle, and very much choked in parts by blackberry. After two seasons of spot-spraying with knapsacks, the blackberry has all but disappeared, and the rushes now form a dense stand that becomes daily more difficult to penetrate.

Above the swamp a steep hillside watered by springs slopes back to the western boundary where the property adjoins the View Hill Scientific Reserve. The hill is clothed partly in mature beech and partly in rough grass, gorse and regenerating manuka. The bush contains some fine specimens of black beech and a thin sprinkling of younger rimu, kahikatea, matai and pokaka. We were also to discover that this is good orchid country (see Dr. Moore's article - "An Orchid Walk in North Canterbury" in the 1969 Journal).

Our plan was to fence off the property from stock, and allow the native cover to regenerate. Although some of our neighbours would have it otherwise, the presence of cattle has in the past caused serious damage to the property. In much of the bush the understorey had been almost entirely eaten out, and blackberry and broom were infiltrating it.

The constant trampling of cattle-hooves was preventing slips on the unstable hillside from healing over, and we suspected that they were also helping to spread blackberry from one part of the property to another. On the other hand, by fencing off we would probably lose certain herbs growing on the grazed slopes; and more subjectively, there would be a sense of diminished space as glades and hilltop clearings became grown over. Nevertheless, there was never any doubt in our minds that the cattle must go. The effects have been quite dramatic. It has been a delight to see damp, mossy banks, formerly bare, sprouting miniature rock gardens of seedling broadleaf, acaena, nertera depressa, pseudowintera and fuschia.

We were particularly pleased to see the rapid spread of fuschia excorticata, from a few severely-browsed clumps. These too, have recovered remarkably well. The regeneration of podocarps appears at the moment to be confined to kahikatea seedlings, which are emerging in dozens on the mossy floor within a radius of several metres of the parent trees. Regeneration of young manuka on the grazing land above the bush-line has been rapid; in the first 12 months existing manuka grew approximately 8" - 9" above the previous year's browsing level, and seedlings are now spreading over a large neighbouring area of rough grazing land. Further north, where the ground rises to an exposed hill-top, grass still predominates, but reversion to native cover seems only a matter of time. In the meantime, spot spraying of noxious weeds will remain important, particularly in open areas, where it seems likely that the spread of blackberry and broom from neighbouring thickets would inhibit colonisation by native species.

An important part of our plan was to prepare an initial list of the present plant cover, by which to measure the future pattern of regeneration. Our own botanical knowledge was quite inadequate for this task, and we were fortunate to have the expertise of the botanical society so generously placed at our disposal. The list compiled by members during visits to the property in December, 1976, and in February of this year, will be a valuable source of reference in years to come; no doubt when a new list is made in 5 years' time, further interesting changes will have taken place.

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A check list of plants found by members of the Canterbury Botanical Society on the property of Mr. A. Holcroft, adjacent to View Hill Reserve on 13th February, 1977.

Note: This is not a critical species list, identifications having been made in the field with in many cases incomplete specimens. It is based on a list of plants from the View Hill Reserve compiled by Mr. Kelly but adds to it considerably. It is hoped that as we further study the property and its ensuing regeneration progress, verification of names used in this check list will be attempted.