

A TRIP TO WAIKANAĒ.MARCH 2ND, 1946.

A stormy morning deterred several members from making the trip, so only five met at Waikanae railway station at about 10.30 a.m. These were well rewarded for their courage, for there was no rain there and the sun shone brightly before lunchtime. The objective was that large patch of bush which covers almost the whole face of the hill at the back of Waikanae village. Kapakapanui is the name given to it on many maps, though that name is usually applied now to the higher hill further back in the Rikiorangi Valley. It is about 1500 feet high, and runs parallel with the coast from which it is separated by two or three miles of swamp and sandhill country through which the Waikanae river winds its way to the sea.

Most of this bush is a reserve set aside by the Parata Estate at the suggestion of the late Mr. W. Field who did so much to preserve the bush in this locality. Mr. Mowbray, manager of the Estate, acts as custodian of the reserve, and permission was obtained from him to make the excursion.

We entered the bush almost opposite the back of the Waikanae School House, and found a fairly well-defined track which led across an almost level stretch of ground for a few hundred yards. After crossing a stream we left the path and the ground began to rise sharply. For some time we scrambled through thick undergrowth until we reached a sharp ridge which took us steadily upward through more open bush. We lunched about three parts of the way up, and then continued to the top from which there was a fine view over into Rikiorangi Valley and out over the coastal area with Kapiti Island in the distance and the river following its devious course to the sea.

The vegetation throughout was typical of the Wellington west coastal hills, and during the trip we noted between eighty and ninety species, about twenty five of which were ferns, the rest trees and shrubs with a few climbers sedges and grasses.

On the lower slopes we passed through that association of karaka (Corynocarpus laevigatus), kohokohe (Dysoxylum spectabile), and tawa (Beilschmiedia tawa) which is common on this coast and which makes such a thick canopy that little grows in the permanent twilight beneath it. On the outskirts there were a few ngaio, coprosmas, -- robusta and grandifolia - kawakawa, and poroporo (Solanum aviculare).

As the ground rose the karakas thinned out and we passed some fine nikau palms while along the stream were observed several pukatea (Laurelia novae-zealandiae). Along the stream also were many ferns, Dryopteris pennigera in its favourite haunt, Elechnum in plenty, B. procerum, filiforme, fluviatile, and lanceolatum, with Polypodium pustulatum and P. diversifolium covering fallen logs and tree trunks. Arthropteris tenella was there with its shining, beautifully shaped fronds, many of the Aspleniums, A. bulbiferum, lucidum, adiantoides, with A. hookerianum and A. colensoi on drier ridges, and A. flaccidum in various forms. The tree ferns, Oyathea medullaris and C. dealbata, and Dicksonia were plentiful, also several filmy ferns, Cardiomanes (Trichomanes) reniforme, a Lindsaya, and Pellaea rotundifolia.

Striking on the slopes were groups of ancient rata trees often storm-battered, but bearing on their branches enormous loads of epiphytes, Griselinia lucida, Pittosporum cornifolium, Astelias, orchids - Marina mucronata, and E. autumnalis, Dendrobium, ferns, climbing ratas, and just for good measure, great vines of Rubus australis and Rhipogonum scandens. Relics also of the virgin forest were some old rimus, and totaras. Matai, miro, hinau, and rewarewa were present in small numbers.

The remainder was made up of those large shrubs and small trees which comprise second growth on most of our hills, such as Coprosmas, Brachyglottis repanda, two or three Pittosporums, Suttonia australis, Hedyccarya arborea, Carpodetus serratus, Meliclytus ramiflorus, and M. lanceolatus, Olea montana, Fuchsia excorticata, some large Pseudopanax crassifolium, Schefflera, Wintera axillaris, with large clumps of Cladium and the tenacious Uncinia.

One specimen of our native sandalwood, Mida salicifolia, was found about half way up. This tree seems always to be solitary, and one wonders if it is a left-over from some previous vegetation, or if there is any place where it is plentiful. Its beautiful foliage would make it well worth cultivating if one could ever catch it in seed or find any young ones.

We were able to cover only a small portion of the bush at the southern end, so the area should be well worth another visit, either by following the same route directly to the top and then north along the ridge, or by going further north before entering so as to explore the bush towards that end. Either way would make a pleasant and profitable excursion.

M.M.N.

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GAY FUNGI AT THE KEITH GEORGE MEMORIAL PARK.

On Saturday June 1st, a crisp winter afternoon, a party of twenty members and friends visited the Keith George Memorial Park, in the Hutt Valley beyond Haywards. Of immediate interest were the Eugenia malro trees growing in a small clump in a swampy place beside which a well defined track led up the hill. Up we all went, firstly through tawa forest with an odd kamahi tree among it, and ferns in plenty, especially Cyathea dealbata and Leptopteris hymenophylloides. Next, and quite abruptly, we came into beech forest, with a lighter undergrowth which was dominated by a dainty Coprosma.

Fungi were very evident. I collected twenty-five different fungal fructifications but of these only five could be named for certain by the expert to whom they were referred. A neat brown and cream puff-ball, one to two inches across, opening by a round hole on the top, was identified as Lycoperdon compactum. Small dark-brown funnel-shaped cups were Polyporus oblectans, black, open, saucer-shaped cups about one inch in diameter were Peziza melastoma. A smaller, pale salmon-pink cup was Cyphella sp. Jet black clubs about two inches tall, represented the Geoglossaceae. There were many dainty Agarics, black, red, blue-green, yellow and browns. Even more brightly coloured were the various Clavarias, cream, pink, brilliant orange and yellow, and a beautiful mauve form which we also collected last year on a Botanical Society excursion to the Wellington Botanical gardens. In the autumn and winter months the fungi are a delightful feature of the bush.

We returned by rail-car discussing our trip on the way. We all agreed that a whole day could be spent with profit in this park at any time of the year.

Greta E. Cone.

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