

HUTT ROAD.

The Wellington Beautifying Society called for support from all the local bodies of Wellington district and a number of Societies including our own in a move to preserve from development the steep hillside bordering the Hutt Road. A meeting of representatives of these bodies was called and I attended representing the Wellington Botanical Society. The meeting decided to send a deputation to the government to ask that the strip of steep hillside bordering the Hutt Road between the boundary of Wellington City and the Petone Woollen Mills be set aside as a reserve, preferably by setting back the road boundary to the top of the steep hill. I went with the deputation which waited on the Minister for Lands, the Hon. Mr. Skinner, and the Minister in charge of Main Highways, the Hon. Mr. Semple, who received us most sympathetically and promised that the appropriate department would search the titles of the lands involved for a first step.

The Wellington Beautifying Society has already done commendable work in planting, or supplying for planting, native trees and shrubs for many streets and highways of Wellington district, for which purpose their nursery at Mt. Crawford gaol grows large numbers of plants. Members of the Botanical Society could help in this work by collecting seed of suitable species, which I would be glad to accept and deliver to the Beautifying Society.

Greta Cone.

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MURITAI - PENCARROW.

Across Port Nicholson from Wellington is a stretch of rocky coast, leading to Pencarrow Head. Rising steeply to 500 ft. and more, it is in places steeply cliffed; it feels the full force of N.W. and S.W. winds and it provides varied habitats for many genera of different growth forms. Large-leafed, glossy karakas may be found within a few yards of moss-like clumps of Scleranthus, mats of Raoulia australis and rigid Aciphylla squarrosa. Perfect weather conditions and an early flowering season combined on October 4, 1947, to give Botanical Society members an enjoyable day's wander over shingle and rock.

A few patches of remnant forest gave a fair idea of the original forest covering on more stable slopes. Typical plants were Ngaio, mahoe, kawakawa, karaka, Shawia paniculata, tree tutu. Undergrowth was not dense, Solanum aviculare being prominent, with the divaricating Coprosma rhamnoides and the ferns Asplenium lucidum and Polystichum richardii.

Following the burning and grassing of the steep hillsides native shrubs including manuka, tauhinu, Olearia solandri, Hebe salicifolia, hybrid Coprosmas, Shawia paniculata, rangiora and native flax, will regenerate providing that burning does not continue. Tauhinu and manuka sometimes share the dominance but in more exposed coastal locations tauhinu is more abundant. Where burning has continued grass has increased its hold and now covers many slopes near Muritai.

The steep shattered greywacke provides foothold for many plants, some with close affinities with or identical to those of the mountain flora. Shrubs growing on the cliffs are stunted and wind-trimmed especially the tauhinu and taupata. Many of the

species on the rock grow also elsewhere but a few belong there, such as, Hymenantha crassifolia, Scleranthus biflorus, Aciphylla squarrosa and Pimelia prostrata. A small shingle slide carried several species all found also on the cliffs nearby but growing in the shingle with characteristic deep roots or underground stems:- Senecio lautus, Cassinia leptophylla, Vittadinia australis, Pimelia prostrata, Coprosma propinqua, Craspedia uniflora (very conspicuous), Agropyron scabrum and several other grasses had densely matted roots.

A few small sand dunes were seen held mainly by Spinifex hirsutus, and Scirpus frondosus. Coarser gravel on the beach harboured some stunted and inconspicuous herbs such as Ranunculus acaulis and Geranium sessiliflorum. A small stream tumbling off the cliffs at one point watered a few delicate ferns and so sprayed the rocks that they were covered with mosses and liverworts.

About midday the party halted and lunched. Some stayed and took to the sea for their botany and others went on to the Head. Here tauhinu has completely replaced the manuka and Poa caespitosa was common. A glimpse of Koangatira lagoon, with its Raoulia covered beach, and time to return. A hurried slog back over the shingle, a ride on a member's small truck and a handsome Agave flowering completed an interesting field day.

R. McQueen.

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EXCURSION TO THE MOUTOA PHORMIUM RESEARCH AREA, FOXTON.

Some 24 members of the Society travelled by Field's express to Shannon where they were met by Moutoa Area transport and taken to the central headquarters and laboratory. There they were joined by a contingent of the Levin Flora Club. Mr. Boyce in charge of the Phormium experimental work and Mr. Wilson the manager of the area and Mr. Swindlehurst his assistant then took over. While being refreshed with lunch Mr. Boyce explained briefly the Phormium experimental work being undertaken. The Moutoa had been taken over by the Government in 1940 as the last of the "natural" Phormium areas which had once extended along the banks of the Manawatu River almost as far as Palmerston North. These areas had all disappeared by drainage and clearing during the vicissitudes of the "N.Z. hemp" trade. Fibre production had fallen to such a low figure that it was necessary to take steps to ensure supplies for the Woolpack and Textile factory at Foxton.

Following a survey which determined the vegetation and its ecological status, the area was being developed as a managed Phormium area. Much had been cleared and planted to selected varieties. Further varieties were being produced by crossing the two species Phormium tenax and P. colensoi to give different fibre characteristics. "Yellow leaf" disease, which was giving trouble was being investigated intensively. Something was seen of the experimental work, the natural areas and the plantations.

A fleeting glimpse was also seen of a pleasant remnant of kahikatea forest on the bank of the river. This forest once extended all along the bank but had been cleared in the early days of settlement.

Refreshed by the healing waters of Shannon the party once again embarked on the Field's express for Wellington. Sincere thanks are owing to Mr. and Mrs. Boyce and to Messrs. Wilson and Swindlehurst for the excellence and smoothness of the arrangements.

A.L.P.

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