

## Field Day

Otari - 1.30pm - 5.50pm

The Society held its first Field Day on Saturday 2nd September at Otari Native Plant Museum.

Mrs M. M. Martin acted as leader and explained the work that was being done at Otari on the lines of the Cockayne Scheme. Mr Andrew McKay also offered guidance and gave information. The afternoon proved a great success, the weather being exceptionally fine and the function being attended by 30 members.

## **Combined Outings of Wellington Botanical Society and Levin Native Flora Club**

*As remembered by  
Frances Duguid, Levin*

Looking back, I am struck by the fact that the early Bot. Soc. excursions were not so adventurous or strenuous as they have been lately. There were many tracts of native vegetation known in a general way to certain of the members, and the need for Botany Division and for the Botanical Society was to let a group of enthusiasts loose in the field to pool their observations, to get a more complete knowledge of the local flora on which to base later discoveries. Many of these easily accessible places were within reach of the Levin Flora Club members as well as the Wellington folk. When the Levin club was formed, it was natural for the two groups to plan outings likely to be of interest to both.

The first outing planned as a combined event was to Papaitonga bush, entering by the Buller Road entrance. Most of us were strangers to each other. The only person I specifically remember was Ruth Mason, because I was sitting next to her at lunch time, and she gave me the name for *Oplismenus*.

The next outing was to Paekakariki, the two parties to meet at the Paekakariki railway station, with Ruth Mason as the leader. The weather at the Wellington end was so bad that they decided the excursion was off. Knowing that the Levin party had started on their way, Lucy Moore came up to Paekakariki so as not to disappoint us. In the event, we had delightful weather on our side of the hill, so we walked up the hill road and down again, with Lucy putting her full attention to instructing us along the way, so we were the lucky ones. Lucy asked me to write up a report of the outing for the Botanical Society newsletter, or whatever it was called. It was a small cyclostyled paper of few pages, mostly chatty, of which Lucy was the Editor. My report appeared in No. 9.

The next combined outing seems to have been a large party from Wellington with what seems to have been the whole of the Levin Native Flora Club to visit

some second growth but very rich bush in the foothills over the Ohau River to near the lower reaches of the Makeretu Stream (see photo page 38). The bush appeared to be in a natural state but had actually been milled by some of the earliest millers in the district. Bartholomew's, as occasional rusting pieces of machinery showed. The stones emerging above a small trickling watercourse were richly covered with bryophytes, filmy ferns abounded, swamp maire sent up pneumatophores through the mud, and kotukutuku tress overhung the valley floor.

Another early combined meeting was to Otaihangā where we enjoyed the vegetation of the damp flats, encountering *Leptinella dioica* ssp. *monoica* for the first time. Lucy Moore and I wandered afar on the sand flats, finding many treasures, so that when the call came to return to Miss Neumann's house, we somehow did not hear it. When we did get back, I was in the dogbox. I trust that Lucy had diplomatic immunity.

Other outings were attended, whether arranged as combined excursions or just attended *en masse* by Flora Club members, I am not sure. Some were as follows. . .

To Mangaroa bog, where Mr Harris showed the technique of core sampling of peat which he explained to the members seated around; . . . to the South Wellington coast via Wainuiomata to see coastal vegetation, particularly *Muehlenbeckia astonii*. Memories of this excursion include travelling along the road beside the Orongorongo River with the opposite riverbank lined with very many cabbage trees, all flowering profusely. Their scent filled the whole valley as we passed along it. At the coast, the raised beaches had plenty of interesting plants. We recognised these as belonging to different periods, but the significance of the raised beaches was not so generally appreciated then. After a stroll along the coast for a short distance, we reached a little dry gorge. At the mouth of this were *Raoulia australis* and *R. glabra*. Going in, the sides narrowed, and rounding a right-hand bend we were greeted by the sight of the steep cliff covered from top to bottom with a sheet of *Arthropodium cirratum* in full flower.

Other outings were attended by Native Flora Club members at their own choice. One I remember was when the Scientific Reserve on the Hautere plain was first reserved. Under Tony Druce's leadership we were shown the way of measuring forest content. We were asked to list the species we saw and to state which species we considered dominant. A profitable and interesting day.

The last planned, combined outing was to Otari on the occasion Mr Brockie's retirement. This was very well attended and was a happy occasion but a sad one. After a good look around Otari, we were treated to afternoon tea at Mr and Mrs Brockie's house.

Flora Club members in more recent times have formed a profitable habit of joining in many of the day excursions of the Bot. Soc., where they have received first hand instruction and demonstrations in the field on specific topics by specialist leaders.

Many of the Wellington scientists and others have given lectures to the Flora Club meetings. In earlier times, it was generally a talk in the evening followed by an outing the next day, providing pleasure for the Club and informed practical grounding in field botany, a service rendered by the Wellington folk with profit to the Levin group. For these double occasions, the Club President and his wife, Mr and Mrs Parsons, took pleasure in hosting the visitors in their home.