

Otari Path Names Commemorate Early Botanists

J S Reid, Wellington

INTRODUCTION

Leonard Cockayne's name is indelibly inscribed on his gravestone at Otari Open-air Native Plant Museum, but many of his recommendations for development of the reserve have been forgotten. One of his more whimsical ideas was to give names to paths. The writer was privileged in the early 1930's to spend time in Cockayne's home in Ngaio, when he was nearly blind, to read items of concern to him. In conversation he referred to paths being given names, but it was not until I had started an honours thesis at Otari (on a subject suggested by Cockayne) that I first saw named paths on a map. My request to the Wellington City Parks and Reserves Department for an Otari map was met with one showing contour lines, streams, bush-edges, paths, boundaries and other features. In 1982 it was a surprise to discover that no tracing or other prints could be found. Figure 1 reproducing selected material from the map gives the path names and the location of some early plantings made at Cockayne's request, and referred to in a booklet published by Wellington City Council in 1932, "A Scheme for the Development and Arrangement of the Otari Open-Air Native Plant Museum" by Dr L Cockayne (hereinafter referred to as "Cockayne 1932"). Pertinent clauses from the latter are:-

Page 2 paragraph 6 "In order to define clearly the position of the various collections, etc, of the Museum each path and salient topographical feature must have a name."

Page 2 paragraph 7 "It has been decided that such names, with but few exceptions, shall be those of the botanists who, by their researches, have brought about the present knowledge of the flora and vegetation of New Zealand, so that the history of our botany from the first voyage of Captain Cook up to the present time may be chronicled in the Museum. Already the great names of Banks, Solander, the Forsters, d'Urville, the Cunninghams, Hooker, Colenso, Cheeseman, Kirk and Petrie are commemorated. Exceptions to the rule have already been made in the naming of certain places after Their Excellencies, Sir Charles and Lady Alice Fergusson, Lord and Lady Bledisloe, and the two Mayors who were connected with the establishment of the Museum."

The surveyor and/or draughtsman obviously followed instructions more detailed than the foregoing script, in that Cockayne himself is commemorated in "Cockayne Heights" close to the reserve western boundary at 200m altitude on the leading spur from Flax Clearing to the ridge-top. Also, the map includes the names of Haast, MacKenzie (the Director of Parks and Reserves who was closely associated with Cockayne in the Otari project), Travers, Aston and the two Mayors (Troup and Hislop). An inexplicable omission is Colenso, probably the most active New Zealand resident field botanist. Darwin's name is included, being associated with a rock mass by Hooker Path. Additional features entered on the original map are the subject of comment in Cockayne 1932, especially under the heading "The Work Accomplished and In Hand in 1931", pages 5-7; a few of these features warrant specific mention along with the paths.

NAMES FOR PATHS AND SOME OTHER FEATURES

An extension of the path naming scheme by application of other names to new paths might reasonably be suggested, with particular regard to botanists whose names were frequently on Cockayne's lips – names like Allan, Scott-Thomson, Simpson, Cranwell and Moore.

Banks and Solander, who came to New Zealand in 1769 in Cook's "En-deavour", are the names applied to the two main entrances to Otari, *Banks* entrance from Wilton Road, close to the curator's house, and *Solander* entrance from Wilton Bush Road, where the Kaiwharawhara Stream emerges. A visitor, 60 years ago, using Solander entrance, had the choice of a level path, Hooker Path, following up the stream, or a lefthand uphill route. At the stream side of Hooker Path, named after J D Hooker, who visited New Zealand in 1840 but is remembered particularly for his comprehensive volumes on the New Zealand flora published 1852-55, the visitor would certainly have lingered in the Gresley Lukin Alpine Garden. To quote Cockayne 1932 under "Work Accomplished and In Hand in 1931":- ". . . as many (plants) cannot be cultivated, except under the special conditions it offers, (the garden) may be looked upon in part as a representation of the flora of the high mountain belt. It already contains more than 300 species, etc, of high mountain plants, all of which are growing well." As a visitor, and collector of plants at that time, the writer was impressed by the flowering of *Celmisia* and *Ranunculus* species. Maximum-minimum thermometer readings made further up the enclosed valley in 1934, confirmed that relatively-severe winter frosts were experienced, which was probably significant in relation to alpine plant health.

To continue with the 1929 scene, the visitor would have noticed across the path from the Alpine Garden, a recent planting of small trees. They represented subalpine forest from the head of the Otira River – one of the artificial communities established at Cockayne's behest. Today both of the gardens have been submerged by the unchecked entry and growth of lowland bush-margin trees of the locality. The special conditions which the alpine garden offered in 1929 would have included a measure of sunshine that height growth in trees across the stream will have affected; some other conditions are still favourable.

About 75m upstream from the bridge by the alpine garden site, the smooth flow of the stream by Hooker Path is interrupted by a solid rock mass called Darwin Rock by Cockayne. He liked to dwell on the analogy of Darwin's having changed the course of biological thought and study as the resistant rock changed and tortured the running waters. Hooker Path is joined some 75m further upstream by Haast Path coming in acutely from the right, and another from the left which, after a bridge-crossing, becomes Hislop Path, named after a city mayor. The path named Haast after the well-known geologist and botanical collector in 1860-70, goes steeply uphill to emerge eventually at Chartwell Drive. Beyond a bend in the stream and path where veteran miro, hinau and rewarewa trees occupy the steep bank on the right, Hooker Path becomes Cheeseman Path at a bridge, crossing MacKenzie Burn, coming in from the west (right). Cheeseman carried on from Hooker, the major role in systematic botany as the path named after him did, but it is significant that another broad path originated at the bridge. It is called the Kirk Path to give due recognition to his contribution in the same field from 1863-88, thus pre-dating Cheeseman. There is a narrow track following-up MacKenzie Burn, named after W T Travers whose work from 1854, as an active collector of alpine plants, especially in the Nelson district, is deservedly recognised. Recognition is manifest also in many

botanical names for alpine plants. The uphill Kirk Path provides access to Flax Clearing and to on-going tracks (see Fig. 1), but it also leads to at least two of Cockayne's artificial communities intended for the cleared crest of the spur where pastoral farming had been carried on. About half way to Flax Clearing, two *Libocedrus plumosa* trees are seen on the left, marking the "New Zealand Conifers" project. Despite intrusion by broad-leaved indigenous species many planted conifers have persisted, among them the northern group of kauri and *Phyllocladus* spp along with totara, kahikatea and one or two recently-planted rimu. Merging with the planted conifers is a natural grove of matai, seen on the left side of the path. On the right side of the path are black maire and kahikatea trees and then back on the left, a large *Halocarpus kirkii*, as if to honour the name given to the path; that tree has juvenile foliage to a surprising height. Flax Clearing – an open grassy spur-top – is characterised by plantings of flax, toetoe and hedges of pohutukawa and *Olearia paniculata*.

A poorly-defined track up the spur leaves Flax Clearing where three malformed *Nothofagus* trees persist. Occasional spaced *Dodonaea*s mark the northern margin of the intended "kauri forest". Aerial photos taken in 1945 and 1954 show the planted areas and hedge, very clearly, including one hedge west of the planted kauri trees. It is of interest to read in Cockayne 1932 of "Work Accomplished 1931": . . . a considerable piece of ground has been prepared for the establishment of an artificial kauri forest and a few kauri trees have already been planted." Storms from the south, soon after planting, played havoc with the young kauri trees, many of which were bent over and have remained bent; uninvited invaders were especially kanuka, manuka, mahoe and rewarewa which effectively suppressed most of the kauri trees for nearly 60 years, although most have survived with heights often only 2-3m. At the southwest end the kauri plantings have the natural bush-edge as a very effective shelter from southerly gales and perfectly-shaped kauri trees (up to 13m height and 33cm dbh) merge with the tall, fastigate rewarewa and kahikatea trees, whose understorey includes *Ackama* and *Toronia*, both of tree size, and natural bush components kohekohe, tawa, hinau and mahoe. Among small items are two *Halocarpus kirkii* still with juvenile foliage after nearly 60 years.

If the visitor does not wish to retrace his steps by Kirk Path he can descend from Flax Clearing southward to Petrie Path which turns east at a high level above Bledisloe Gorge to follow it to the junction with Kaiwharawhara Stream where Cheeseman Path terminates at a bridge leading to the Troup Picnic Area. There is now no path following alongside the main (Kaiwharawhara) Stream, but the main arterial route to the extensive western bush crosses by a bridge from the picnic ground. A side track linking higher up Bledisloe Gorge with Petrie Path was a favourite place for Lady Alice (Fergusson) and carries her name. Petrie published many papers relating to systematic botany while Cheeseman was engaged on his monumental task.

For the visitor seeking an exit from Otari to Wilton Road, a zig-zag path climbs steeply up the eastern slope named after B C Aston, an active field botanist in the early decades of this century, to the large garden devoted to showing comprehensive generic shrub collections drawn from all parts of New Zealand. One effect of bringing together species from geographically-separated localities is that, occasionally, hybrids arise. The path layout is likely to draw the visitor to a path close to and parallel to the southern boundary; it is called the Forster Path after the botanists who came on Captain Cook's second voyage, 1773. Exit to Wilton Road is by the Banks entrance.

Folk wishing to go back to the Wilton Bush Road (Solander) entrance, follow Cunningham Path, named after Allan Cunningham of Sydney Botanical Gardens who, with help from his brother, did a great deal of intensive collection in North Auckland from 1826 to 1838. This path runs north, parallel with Wilton Road, passing the Interpretive Centre to the northernmost exit to that road where it meets the Richard d'Urville Path. The latter is downhill, parallel with the northeast reserve boundary, and emerges at Solander entrance: it commemorates Richard and d'Urville, two of the group of French collectors and botanists during the period 1824 to 1842. d'Urville's published work in 1832 on the New Zealand flora occupies an important niche in New Zealand botany. Linking Cunningham Path with the one commemorating the French group has the logic of recognition by him of Richard's work which he included in material prepared for publication. Botanical names do, of course, provide abundant evidence of the work by Raoul and Lesson, as well as those already mentioned.

FINAL NOTE

It may be possible during the preparation of a management plan for Otari to have some of the Cockayne proposals resurrected, perhaps to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the publication by the WCC of "The Scheme" bearing his name. Enough remains of the "Kauri Forest" and the "New Zealand Conifers" to warrant further attention to them without depreciating the very attractive planting of the latter in a garden setting by the Interpretive Centre. In the forest setting on Flax Clearing Spur the time would be appropriate for inter-planting in line with the Cockayne Scheme.

Himalayan Trek

*Ian Powell
Porirua*

At 7am on 7th February 1972, twenty-three 'botsocers' gathered at Wellington Airport for a seven weeks' overseas holiday which embraced a few days' sightseeing in Singapore and Bangkok, 25 days trekking in the Annapurna-Dhaulagiri region of the Himalayas, more sightseeing in Kathmandu, a visit to the Taj Mahal in India and a final shopping spree in Hong Kong. We all carried Air New Zealand cabin bags clearly printed on one side on a green background "Wellington Botanical Society Tour 1972". The trip was the culmination of a year's planning during which we decided on the particular area in Nepal we would visit and enrolled sufficient members to ensure we would benefit from the substantial travel concessions offered parties of fifteen or more.

For the 25-day trek we engaged the services of Mountain Travel, Nepal, who provided everything necessary for the trek apart from footwear, clothing and other personal items. We had first class German expedition tents, foam