

Ripogonum scandens
Schoenus maschalinus
Thelymitra longifolia
Uncinia banksii

Uncinia uncinata
Winika cunninghamii

Trip Report: Visit to the QE II native bush covenant of Derek and Primrose Williamson, Griggs Road, Whitford, 18 July 2009

Mike Wilcox and Maureen Young

This mid-winter trip started with the threat of heavy rain, but the day turned out comfortably dry, with the bush sheltering us from the blustery westerlies. Our leaders were landowners Derek and Primrose Williamson of "Ratanui", 28 Griggs Road, Whitford, and our group was: Chris Ashton, Tricia Aspin, Colleen Brewer, Warren Brewer, Jan Butcher, Elaine Marshall, Barrie McLeay, John Millett, Suman Pancha, Alison Wesley, Mike Wilcox, Maureen Young.

lanceolata), mamangi (*Coprosma arborea*), lancewood (*Pseudopanax crassifolius*) and titoki (*Alectryon excelsus*), with emergent rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*), and marginally, kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. D. & P. Williamson's bush, "Ratanui", 28 Griggs Rd, Whitford. Google Earth.

The Williamson's bush (Fig. 1) is at the head of the Mangemangeroa Valley, Whitford. They have lived there since 1950. The bush area is fenced off and covers 14 ha of which 10 ha is in a QEII covenant. We started by looking at a piece of open ground that had been successfully planted up in native trees, from wilding seedling stock from the property. A prominent species here was mapou (*Myrsine australis*).

The main block of bush lies on a south-facing slope and supports a dense, mixed broadleaved forest some 20 m tall, the dominant species being taraire (*Beilschmiedia tarairi*) with a sprinkling of tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa*), white maire (*Nestegis*



Fig. 2. Mixed broadleaved forest dominated by taraire. Photo: M. D. Wilcox, 18 July 2009.

A feature of the lower slopes beside the Mangemangeroa Stream was pukatea (*Laurelia novae-zelandiae*) represented by several large, healthy trees, and stands of kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*). Epiphytes and climbers were not abundant, with just a few *Earina mucronata*, *Collospermum hastatum* and *Astelia solandri*, and one plant of *Pittosporum cornifolium* making up the perching flora, and occasional woody vines, predominantly *Metrosideros fulgens*, *Parsonsia heterophylla*, *Muehlenbeckia australis* and *Passiflora tetrandra*. The common subcanopy and understorey shrubs and trees were pigeonwood (*Hedycarya arborea*), kaikomako (*Pennantia corymbosa*), mahoe (*Melicytus ramiflorus*) and nikau (*Rhopalostylis sapida*), with milk tree (*Streblus heterophyllus*) and kanono (*Coprosma grandifolia*) prominent near the stream. Silver fern (*Cyathea dealbata*) was the commonest tree fern. The species that we all agreed was present in unusual abundance was kaikomako, with numerous seedlings and saplings throughout the bush, and some good-sized trees closer to the stream. The ground flora was noteworthy for the abundance and luxuriance of nikau seedlings, *Asplenium lamprophyllum* (Fig. 3) and few patches of *Pteris*



Fig. 3. *Asplenium lamprophyllum* – a notably abundant ground fern. Photo: M. D. Wilcox, 18 July 2009



Fig. 4. Frost damage to *Cyathea medullaris*. Photo: M. D. Wilcox, 18 July 2009



Fig. 5. Rimu growing on the ridge. Photo: M. D. Wilcox, 18 July 2009.

macilentata, *Pteris tremula*, *Lastreopsis hispida* and *Lastreopsis glabella*, but otherwise the heavy leaf litter of taraire was the main ground cover. There was a general absence of forest herbs and ground orchids, and just a sparse scattering of sedges such as *Uncinia uncinata* and *Carex lambertiana*.

Along the Mangemangeroa Stream margin, adjoining pasture, there was clear evidence that Auckland has had a comparatively severe winter – the crowns of young taraire and mamaku (*Cyathea medullaris*) had been frosted (Fig. 4).

The forest on the higher ground near the house is dominated by abundant rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) mainly of 40-60 cm diameter and 20 m tall, obviously the result of dense regeneration following disturbance (fire or logging), probably some 150-180 years ago (Fig. 5). Mixed with it were kahikatea, totara (*Podocarpus totara*), tanekaha (*Phyllocladus trichomanoides*), kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*), puriri (*Vitex lucens*), and five large, remarkable, fully-terrestrial northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*), from which the property, "Ratanui", takes its name. The furrowed bark and rather large leaves suggested that these trees might be hybrids between rata and pohutukawa.



Fig 6. The group beside one of the big rata trees. From left: Derek Williamson, John Millett, Tricia Aspin, Warren Brewer, Maureen Young, Primrose Williamson, Alison Wesley, Elaine Marshall, Jan Butcher, Barrie McLeay, Chris Ashton, Colleen Brewer, Suman Pancha. Photo: M. D. Wilcox, 18 July 2009.

The Williamsons have been very diligent in caring for the bush. It is fully fenced from stock, possums are dealt with through a network of bait stations, and weeds are regularly monitored and removed, with just a few like woolly nightshade (*Solanum mauritianum*), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), privet (*Ligustrum sinense*),

Himalayan honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*) and climbing asparagus (*Asparagus scandens*) still lurking along the margins. The native forest canopy has a most healthy, dense appearance.

The only obvious exotic trees on the property are *Eucalyptus botryoides* and *Eucalyptus saligna*, planted in a woodlot to heal a slipping slope. These trees show out in Fig 1.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to Derek and Primrose for their patient and informative guidance.

Checklist of Vascular Indigenous Plants Compiled by Auckland Botanical Society on 18 July 2009

Ferns

Adiantum cunninghamii (common maidenhair)
Adiantum fulvum (maidenhair)
Asplenium bulbiferum (hen & chicken fern)
Asplenium flaccidum (hanging spleenwort)
Asplenium lamprophyllum
Asplenium oblongifolium (shiny spleenwort)
Asplenium polyodon (sickle spleenwort)
Blechnum chambersii (lance fern)
Blechnum filiforme (thread fern)
Blechnum membranaceum
Blechnum novae-zelandiae (kiokio)
Cyathea dealbata (ponga, silver tree fern)
Cyathea medullaris (mamaku, black tree fern)
Dicksonia squarrosa (wheki)
Histiopteris incisa (matata, water fern)
Hymenophyllum demissum (filmy fern)
Lastreopsis glabella
Lastreopsis hispida (hairy legs)
Loxogramme dictyopteris
Lygodium articulatum (mangemange)
Microsorium pustulatum (hound's tongue fern)
Microsorium scandens (fragrant fern)
Pneumatopteris pennigera (gully fern)
Pteris macilenta (sweet fern)
Pteris tremula (shaking brake)
Pyrrhosia eleagnifolia (leather fern)

Dysoxylum spectabile (kohekohe)
Geniostoma ligustrifolium (hangehange)
Haloragis erecta
Hedycarya arborea (pigeonwood)
Knightia excelsa (rewarewa)
Kunzea ericoides (kanuka)
Laurelia novae-zelandiae (pukatea)
Leucopogon fasciculatus (mingimingi)
Macropiper excelsa (kawakawa)
Melicytus ramiflorus (mahoe)
Metrosideros diffusa (rata vine)
Metrosideros fulgens (red rata vine)
Metrosideros perforata (white rata vine)
Metrosideros robusta (rata)
Muehlenbeckia australis (pohuehue)
Myrsine australis (mapou)
Nestegis lanceolata (white maire)
Parsonsia sp. (native jasmine)
Passiflora tetrandra (native passion flower)
Pennantia corymbosa (kaikomako)
Persicaria decipiens (swamp willow weed)
Pittosporum cornifolium (epiphytic Pittosporum)
Pittosporum tenuifolium (kohuhu)
Pseudopanax crassifolius (lancewood)
Rubus australis (bush lawyer)
Schefflera digitata (pate)
Streblus heterophyllus (milk tree)
Vitex lucens (puriri)

Gymnosperms

Agathis australis (planted) (kauri)
Dacrycarpus dacrydioides (kahikatea)
Dacrydium cupressinum (rimu)
Phyllocladus trichomanoides (tanekaha)
Podocarpus hallii (Hall's totara)
Podocarpus totara (totara)
Prumnopitys ferruginea (miro)
Prumnopitys taxifolia (matai)

Dicotyledons

Acaena novae-zelandiae (bidibid)
Alectryon excelsus (titoki)
Beilschmiedia tarairi (taraire)
Beilschmiedia tawa (tawa)
Brachyglottis repanda (rangiora)
Carpodetus serratus (putaputaweta)
Clematis paniculata (clematis)
Coprosma arborea (mamangi)
Coprosma grandifolia (kanono)
Coprosma macrocarpa (coastal karamu)
Coprosma robusta (karamu)
Coprosma spathulata
Corynocarpus laevigatus (karaka)
Dichondra repens (Mercury Bay weed)

Monocotyledons

Astelia banksii (coastal astelia)
Astelia solandri (perching astelia)
Carex flagellifera (trip-me-up)
Carex lambertiana
Carex lessoniana (cutty grass)
Collosporum hastatum (tank lily)
Cordyline australis (cabbage tree)
Cordyline banksii (bush cabbage tree)
Earina mucronata (spring perching orchid)
Freycinetia banksii (kiekie)
Gahnia lacera (cutty grass)
Lemna minor (duckweed)
Microlaena avenacea (bush rice grass)
Microlaena stipoides (meadow rice grass)
Oplismenus hirtellus (bush panic grass)
Phormium tenax (planted) (harakeke, flax)
Rhopalostylis sapida (nikau)
Ripogonum scandens (supplejack)
Uncinia banksii (fine hook grass)
Uncinia uncinata (hook grass)
Winika cunninghamii (winika) (reported by Primrose Williamson)