



Figure 2. Interior of Rangaika Scenic Reserve on the south coast.

Photo: B. Macmillan

The return to the bus gave fine views of the perpendicular basalt coast line with the Mangere Islands and Pitt Island to the south-east. We passed through meadows of dense *Poa chathamica*. Back at Owenga we turned east to the Manukau farm of the Solomon family where stands the life-like statue of Tommy Solomon (1884-1933) spokesman for Moriori for many years.

## 29 AND 30 NOVEMBER – PITT ISLAND

### Miles Giller

A total of 15 Bot Soccers flew over to Pitt Island on Nov 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup>. We were welcomed at the airstrip by Bernie and Bubbles, who gave us a guided tour of the island's botanical, historical (and culinary) highlights. At Glory Bay we saw the historic Glory Bay cottage, currently under restoration by DOC. On the shore nearby we were shown the ultimate 'loo with a view', an A-frame long-drop overlooking Southeast Island, with an uninterrupted view all the way to South America. On the rocky headland around it we found *Apium prostratum* subsp. *denticulatum*, *Geranium traversii*, the fern *Blechnum durum* (looking and feeling as if it was made from soft plastic, Fig. 3, p 8), and *Disphyma papillatum* resplendent in full pink flower.

The highlight of the day for most was an all-too-brief visit to the Ellen Elizabeth Preece Conservation Covenant, a 25ha predator-free mix of primary, modified-primary and secondary forest and scrub (Fig. 4). A combination of stainless-steel wires, plastic overlay and bird-netting kept wild pigs, cats and weka (introduced to the islands from Canterbury) outside the core area (miraculously, there are no rats on Pitt Island).



Figure 4. Pitt Island: the predator-proofed fence of the Ellen Elizabeth Preece conservation covenant. *Photo: M. & G. Giller*

Almost immediately we noticed birdlife that was sadly missing elsewhere, Chathams Island riroriro (warbler) and kakariki (parakeet) were heard, and a tui landed just above our heads. Alas, there was no sign of any black robins (for whom the enclosure had been developed). The canopy was dominated by the endemics *Dracophyllum arboreum* (with trunks up to 50cm thick), *Olearia traversii*, *Coprosma chathamica* (with its characteristic pink bark on trunks up to 60cm thick), *Pseudopanax chathamicus* and *Myrsine chathamica*. We struck perfect timing for the orchids, with abundant *Pterostylis banksii* flowering on the ground and the local *Pterostylis silvicultrix*, typically perched on *Dicksonia fibrosa* trunks just below the crowns. We were amazed by the size of the *Nematoceras* aff. *sulcatum*, with leaves up to 5cm across, some holding their spent flowers aloft on 10cm long stalks. Ferns were another highlight, with several species not familiar to Cantabrians, including *Asplenium polyodon*, *Microsorium scandens*, *Pteris macilentata*, abundant *Lastreopsis microsora*, and the tree fern *Cyathea cunninghamii*. A wide



Figure3. Pitt Island: *Blechnum durum* on the rocky headland of Glory Bay.  
Photo: M.& G. Giller



Figure 6. Te Matarae forest interior where the upraised limestone with *Asplenium polyodon* in its crevices is reminiscent of Cook Islands makatea.  
Photo: Bill Sykes

range of filmy ferns (especially *Hymenophyllum multifidum*, *H. flabellatum* and *Trichomanes venosum*) were perching on all available sites. The fork-fern *Tmesipteris elongata* was often seen on tree fern trunks. The gigantism of several species is typical of the Chatham Islands, perhaps never more obvious than the local form of *Polystichum vestitum*, which often had leaves arching well over 1.5m high.

A cross-country vehicle ride towards the western side of the island gave us a splendid overview of Mangere Island and Little Mangere, where the black robin population was rescued. Several copses of the endemic rautini (*Brachyglottis huntii*) were seen growing alongside the vehicle track.

Our scenic flight back home allowed us to view the forest restoration work on Mangere Island. We also looked down on a colourful mosaic of peatland forest and wetlands on the southern tablelands of Chatham Island, most of us wishing we could just drop down and explore these extraordinary plant associations.

## **29 NOVEMBER – TE MATARAE, HENGA SCENIC RESERVE**

### **Bill Sykes**

A fine warm day with little wind, echoing my diary comment “dispensed with coat”. Some of our party went to Pitt Island but I remained with the rest on the main island. Firstly our knowledgeable and very helpful driver Alison Davis took us to the southern shore area of Te Whanga Lagoon east of Te One. There we visited Pat Smith’s property at Te Matarae and were taken round by this well-known Chatham personality with very definite views on most things from plants to animals and people, and especially government bureaucracy. Around his sheltered house well-protected by trees that he has planted during the past two decades is a garden of introduced plants. Macaronesian and South African plants were prominent and the arborescent *Echium pininiana* (Fig. 5) and *Melanoselinum decipiens* were in full flower. These were supplemented by the South African composite *Argyranthemum frutescens*, gazanias and aloes, to name the most conspicuous. Mention of such plants draws attention to the Mediterranean climate aspect to much of the garden flora on the Chathams and thus to some adventive species too.