

3 DECEMBER – TEWHANGA LAGOON PETROGLYPHS, OHINEMAMA, AWATOTARA RESERVE

Jennifer Harland

Chatham Island Day was a public holiday and everything was closed. Alison arranged a visit to the local art gallery inside the courthouse where artworks by talented local artists were on display. The museum was also opened for a private viewing and contained many interesting artifacts and information panels.

At 10.30am we departed by bus to see the Petroglyphs which were beside the Te Whanga Lagoon between Te One and the airport turnoff. Some of us were fortunate to find some fossilized shark's teeth on the lagoon edge. The Petroglyphs (rock carvings) were situated at the mouth of a cave called Te ana a moe and were protected from the weather by a wooden shelter. Carved by the Moriori at least 200 years ago these carvings depicted seals and terns. This is significant as the arrival of the white fronted tern signalled the coming of spring.

Flora present in this area of limestone cliffs included *Corynocarpus laevigatus*, *Macropiper excelsum*, *Asplenium lyallii* and some large specimens of *Sophora chathamica*. A tall sedge was tentatively identified as *Carex sectoides*. On the walk back to the bus we noticed several limestone sinkholes. This limestone area is famous as the site of the 'Postbox Cave' into which birds fell and couldn't escape. A large collection of bones from birds which are now extinct is now housed in the Canterbury Museum.

We then drove south from Waitangi along the coast and stopped at the pioneer homestead Ohinemama where lunch was provided by Vi and Bruce Mills. A shelterbelt of large macrocarpas protected a fine garden (Fig. 15, p. 19) and a large specimen of *Crinodendron hookerianum* (origin – Chile) was a highlight (Fig. 16, p 21). We also looked inside the homestead and admired the restored furniture and lovely aspect. A fine lunch was provided in the garden with five different homemade quiches plus salads followed by ginger kisses with cream.

After lunch we continued south to the Awatotara Creek bridge. This valley has been fenced to allow the bush to regenerate (Fig. 17, p. 21). Common species are *Dracophyllum arboreum*, *Pseudopanax chathamicus*, *Phormium* aff. *tenax*, and *Corokia macrocarpa*, with *Leptecophylla robusta* and bracken. The formation of this reserve has benefited parea (Chatham



Figure 16. Lantern bush (*Crinodendron hookerianum* Elaeocarpaceae, origin: forests of Chile) at Ohinemama garden. *Photo: Bill Sykes*



Figure 17. Regeneration in Awatotara basin. *Photo: B. Macmillan*

Island wood pigeon) and we were able to see many of these magnificent birds flying around and feeding in the regenerating bush beside the road.

A school party of boys from Lindisfarne Presbyterian Boys' School (Hawkes Bay) were helping to construct a track in the reserve and performed a haka in the middle of the road. The parea did not seem bothered by all this activity! As we left the reserve we were fortunate to see a flock of five parea grazing in a roadside paddock. Apparently they like clover!

At our last evening meal at the Waitangi Hotel we thanked our hosts and the staff for their care of us, and our guide Alison Davis was presented with a pair of colourful floral-patterned gumboots which she immediately put on.

4 DECEMBER – DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION OFFICE

Gillian Giller

On the last day we stopped briefly at the DOC office before continuing on to the airport. There are 15 full time staff based from this office plus some part time staff. They are mainly involved with the management of the reserves and covenants which cover about 7% of the main island. One of their many jobs includes fencing, for without stock proof fences the vegetation will always be vulnerable to browsing.

Behind the office is a small nursery where a range of local plants are grown for several different programmes (Figs 18 & 19, p.24).

The threatened plants programme involves about 15 species. 2,500 plants are produced annually and planted in reserves and covenants. *Cortaderia turbaria* is the main species propagated. *Hebe barkeri*, *Brachyglottis huntii*, *Aciphylla dieffenbachii* and *Leptinella featherstonii* are produced in smaller numbers. Several of these species are initially propagated at the Motukarara Nursery and flown over in banana boxes to be potted up and grown on to a larger size.

A revegetation programme on Mangere Island was restarted in 1991, continuing the earlier planting done by the Wildlife Service in the mid 1970s to early 1980s. Currently there are about 5,500 trees planted each year. The bulk of these are *Olearia traversii* which are grown by local people. The DOC nursery supplies a few hundred larger grade trees each year which can include *Coprosma chathamica*, *Myrsine chathamica*,