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*Editor's note: In his volume "Out in the Open A Budget of Scraps of Natural History Gathered in New Zealand" 1882, T.H.Potts described a quest to see Maling's fern on Banks Peninsula, having heard that it had been found there. From the summit of Mt Herbert he descended in a southeasterly direction on a path which was understood to lead to Port Levy. At the forest margin where compact forms of *Libocedrus* and graceful stems of *Cordyline indivisa* were conspicuous objects, a fine patch of the fern was found on a prostrate *Libocedrus*. A detailed description of the appearance of *Hymenophyllum malingii* and its habit followed. It had "an air of demure and quaker-like simplicity." Specimens taken for the fern house appeared to have safely established.

A NEW BOOK NEARS COMPLETION: "PLANTLIFE ON BANKS PENINSULA"

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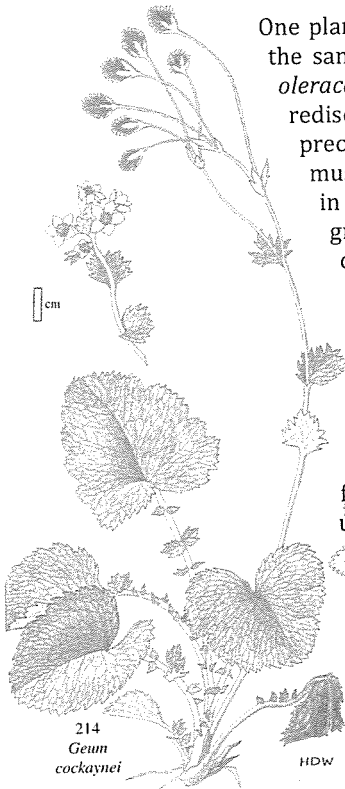
For an embarrassingly large number of years I have been working on an illustrated guide to the plants of Banks Peninsula, similar to field guides already published for Mount Cook National Park and Stewart Island. A nice wet winter in 2010 has kept me planted at the drawing board and it now looks as if I will have all the drawings completed by early 2011. The text is taking on a finished shape, receiving a few tweaks as the drawing progresses. There is nothing quite as good as *drawing* a plant for making you look closely at its details. Also, some new botanical discoveries roll in from the great outdoors (see Miles Giller's article in this journal) adding to what must be covered even at this late stage.

Living in south-east Banks Peninsula is remarkably convenient. Most plants are close to hand when their turn comes to be drawn. But catching them at the right times for flowers and fruit requires some forward thinking and a sharp eye on the seasons. My field notebooks bristle with numerous carefully dated sketches which allow final drawings to be made even in the depths of winter.

An interesting problem looms. Chapter 27 deals with locally rare species, including some that are probably locally extinct. I need to draw from Banks Peninsula material lest I mislead about subtle parochial distinctiveness (I regret to say I have put my foot in it on past occasions). Soon I have to draw yellow beech mistletoe (*Alepis flavida*) and shore spurge (*Euphorbia glauca*). Neither species has been seen wild on Banks Peninsula for several decades now. I will probably have to draw them from the closest possible locations and clearly state their source. But to find them alive and well here would be infinitely better.

One plant I thought I would have to deal with in the same way is Cook's scurvy grass (*Lepidium oleraceum*), until Nick Head's wonderful rediscovery of it in 2000, on top of a precipitous sea stack (Head 2001). (This must be where the expression "finding things in good nick" comes from). Cook's scurvy grass is known to vary greatly across its diminishing geographical range, so it was wonderful to draw it from a local population that no-one had even glimpsed since 1921.

Parahebe lyallii, a.k.a. *Veronica lyallii*, is another plant that seems to have a fairly distinctive Banks Peninsula form. It is far from extinct here, although it is local and uncommon. I have drawn it from the Canterbury mountains where it tends to creep across the ground surface. Banks Peninsula plants tend to form bushy little tufts or clumps. In this case my careful recording system let me down. I thought I had made adequate field drawings, but when the parahebe's turn came for a final drawing I found my notebooks woefully lacking. There was



no prospect of flowering plants for at least four months. This was doubly frustrating. In February 2010 I had made a special foray up Mount Herbert to draw *Geum cockaynei* at its only known Banks Peninsula locality. Perched on a damp rocky ledge in the mist sketching *Geum* I also noted down that *Parahebe lyallii* was in flower all around me, without realizing I needed to make sketches of that plant too. Another focused foray to the top of Mount Herbert seemed to be called for next January.

But what should offer an easier opportunity? None other than the Canterbury Botanical Society Journal. I remembered that someone had recorded it “near the Cabstand”, and had kept my eyes open for it at every chance, without ever seeing it. Now I went back to the journals. Brian Molloy (1976) had written “... there is an excellent population of *Parahebe lyallii* on the steep wet rock faces above the Summit Road, between Hickory Bay and Le Bons Bay” He even gave an exact grid reference. The site is practically on my doorstep, only 25 minutes away uphill on my bike, about 8 minutes for the return. I will check this out in January if not before. There is every chance that the little beauty still grows there.

Hinewai and the gestating book came through September's earthquakes relatively unscathed. When books, pots and pot plants avalanched on to the floor on that frightful Saturday morning, a *Hatiora* (a.k.a. *Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri*) landed upside down only centimeters away from a small stack of laboriously completed drawings. Somehow they escaped flying water, potting mix and plant fragments. Constant aftershocks during the following week tended to un-nerve my drawing hand. The blame for a jiggled seismometer-like line in the depiction of *Clematis afoliata* falls squarely on a 5.1 after-shock on the morning of 8 September, although I attempted to disguise the blip as soon as my heart stopped pounding.

References

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Postscript: On 3 January 2011 Hugh Wilson and Paul Newport visited Brian Molloy's site on the Ellangowan bluffs and found numerous plants of *Parahebe lyallii* coming into beautiful flower on ledges and crannies.