

Trip Report: Kawau Island, 20 March 2010

John Millett

We embarked in good spirits on Rueben's "Mail Run" ferry from Sandspit, bound for Schoolhouse Bay, Bon Accord Harbour on Kawau Island. However, we had a delayed start (10.50 am) from Sandspit, and visited jetties in picturesque Vivian Bay (where a wedding party disembarked), North Cove, and Mansion House Bay, and did not reach our destination until 12.15 pm. All most enjoyable on a perfect Autumn day.

Our group was *Tricia Aspin, Romily Atkinson, Jan Butcher, Paul Christofferson, Stella Christofferson, Frances Duff, Alan Flux, Anne Grace, Shelley Heiss-Dunlop, Leslie Haines, Peter Hutton, Sandra Jones, Barrie McLeay, John Millett, Suman Pancha, Helen Preston Jones, Juliet Richmond, Graeme Rose, Josh Salter, Doug Shaw, Doug Sheppherd, Gorakh Silvester, Alison Wesley, Mike Wilcox* (leader).

We were met at Wallace's jetty by Colin Smithies and Jane Upton whose father Harry Upton built their bach in the 1950s (Fig. 1). Over lunch we were given a brief history of the bay, which included seeing photos of earlier times (1930s) when dairy cows grazed on the pasture-covered hills, and cream was exported from the jetty. Now there is nothing but kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) scrub and scattered pines (*Pinus radiata* and *P. pinaster*), and various invasives such as black wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), sweet pea bush (*Polygala myrtifolia*), blue pea bush or dally pine (*Psoralea pinnata*), harlequin glorybower (*Clerodendrum trichotomum*) and Cape honey flower (*Melianthus major*).



Fig. 1. Schoolhouse Bay, Kawau Island. The Upton bach is the low one on the right, with the planted area extending up the slope towards the tall pines. These slopes were once in grass. All photos: Mike Wilcox, 16 Feb 2010.

But wait ! Not completely true, as Colin and Jane have used their energy and expertise to enrich their property with a great variety of natives all doing well

in the understorey and protected with netting from the ravages of Sir George Grey's wallabies – darma, parma and swamp (a fourth, the brush-tailed rock wallaby is thought not to be now present on Kawau).

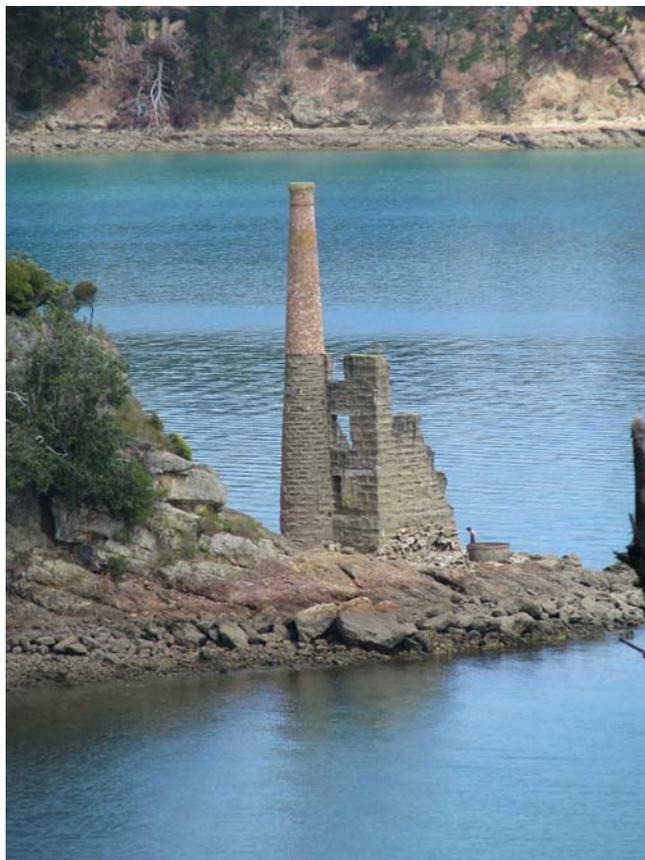


Fig. 2. Old chimney of the copper mine, Kawau Island.

The planted natives were akeake (*Dodonaea viscosa*), lemonwood (*Pittosporum eugenioides*), taupata (*Coprosma repens*), wharangi, (*Melicope ternata*), mapou (*Myrsine australis*), kawakawa (*Macropiper excelsum*), karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigata*), rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*), kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*), lancewood (*Pseudopanax crassifolius*), totara (*Podocarpus totara*), cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*), kauri (*Agathis australis*), poroporo (*Solanum aviculare*), titoki (*Alectryon excelsus*), whau (*Entelea arborescens*), kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*), puriri (*Vitex lucens*), miro (*Prumnopitys ferruginea*), pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*), lacebark (*Hoheria populnea*), and tanekaha (*Phyllocladus trichomanoides*). In Colin's experience wharangi, mapou, poroporo and kawakawa are unpalatable to wallabies, so spring up by themselves. The opening up of the scrub for planting has brought an influx of pioneering plants, particularly common ones being the Australian fireweeds *Senecio diaschides* and *Senecio bipinnatisectus*, and the wallaby-resistant fern *Hypolepis ambigua*. Mike punctuated our leave-taking thanks and

congratulations with the suggestion that tawapou (*Planchonella costata*) is native to Kawau Island (plentiful at Bostaquet Bay) and would be a good one to try.



Fig. 3. Brush cherry (*Syzygium australe*) forming an understorey beneath *Pinus radiata*, Old Coach Road, Kawau Island.

The rest of our island adventure was essentially walking the DoC roads from Schoolhouse Bay to Mansion House Bay, via sections of the Old Coach Road and the track to the old copper mine (Fig. 2) and back along the shore passed Dispute Cove, where we photographed a weka and finished off our lunch in the late afternoon. Mike mentioned to us that botanising on Kawau could be rewarding if a sharp look-out was kept for roadside turf herbs amongst the plethora of tall weeds. Sure enough, we quickly got on to low mixed turfs beside Schoolhouse Bay Road and recorded *Acaena novae-zelandiae*, *Centipeda minima*, *Hypericum pusillum*, and *Lagenifera lanata*. Various adventives too, grew along the road edge, including the very plentiful butterfly bush (*Senna septemtrionalis*), velvet groundsel (*Roldana petasitis*), acmena (*Syzygium smithii*), brush cherry (*Syzygium australe*), castor oil plant (*Ricinus communis*), stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*) – with a camphor-like smell, balloon cotton bush or swan plant (*Gomphocarpus physocarpus*), *Hydrocotyle tripartita* and pitted crassula (*Crassula multicava*). Monocots to catch the eye were pampas (*Cortaderia selloana*), rain lily (*Zephyranthes candida*) with large creamish, starry crocus-like flowers, Scarborough lily (*Cyrtanthus elatus*) with beautiful crimson flowers, stinking iris

(*Iris foetidissima*), the very weedy blue corn lily (*Aristea ecklonii*), and the tall agave-like *Furcraea selloa*. A particularly good patch of *Centipeda minima* was found at the start of the short path to the pioneer cemetery, where Barrie McLeay was pleased to find the grave of one of Gretta McLeay's ancestors.



Fig. 4. Kanuka (*Kunzea ericooides*), track to the copper mine, Kawau Island.

For much of the time we were under very tall (50+ m) radiata pines (*Pinus radiata*), aged about 60 years judging from ring counts on stumps (and some maritime pine *Pinus pinaster*, too), and below it blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), abundant brush cherry (Fig. 3), and natives such as silver fern (*Cyathea dealbata*), mapou, and extensive stands of kanuka (Fig. 4). Even the coastal cliffs and rocks at the copper mine had mostly exotic shrubs (especially *Polygala myrtifolia*), but we also saw patches of the little native prickly heath, *Leucopogon fraseri*. On our downward trek towards Mansion House we noted amongst the towering pines three or four swamp mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*), of great interest to our eucalypt enthusiasts, with its broad leaves, rough form, very thick fibrous bark, and "vines" of aerial roots – an adaptation to the coastal swamps it inhabits in eastern Australia. We also spied a beautiful flooded gum (*Eucalyptus grandis*) and several large bunya (*Araucaria bidwillii*). Nearing Mansion House we paused beside some ponds where there were splendid groves of Australian cabbage palm (*Livistona australis*), and in the water itself, pickerel (*Pontederia cordata*) and Senegal tea (*Gymnocoronis spilanthoides*). The various exotic trees such as Italian alder (*Alnus cordata*), Chilean wine palm (*Jubaea chilensis*), holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) and silky oak (*Grevillea robusta*) to name just a few in the Mansion House grounds were much admired, especially by Alan and Suman. On a brief walk along part of the track to Momona Point we encountered a grove of blush bloodwood (*Baloghia inophylla* – one of George Grey's introductions from Norfolk Island, and a couple of Soledad pines (*Pinus torreyana*) a great rarity in our area. Mike pointed out several Parramatta wattle (*Acacia parramattensis*) and much Mauritius

hemp (*Furcraea foetida*) on the coastal cliffs in Mansion House Bay.

Sandra investigated the Redwood Track and reported a grand clump of coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), two bad weeds – lantana (*Lantana camara*) and moth plant (*Araujia hortorum*), and some noteworthy natives too: *Tmesipteris tannensis*

and a big kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*).

By 4.30 pm most had had enough walking, and the ferry was ready for the return trip to Sandspit, which we did via a stop at the South Cove wharf. Thanks to Mike for a great botanists' picnic day.

Previous Bot Soc trips to Kawau Island on record have been reported as follows:

Gardner, R.O. 1993: Some plants of Kawau Island. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 48: 2-5.

Goffart-Hall, L. 1997: Notable trees of Mansion House, Kawau Island. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 52: 63-64.

McSweeney, C. 1997: Kawau Island botanical dilemma. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 52: 61-63.

Wilcox, M.; Young, M.; Beever, J.; Kooperberg, R. 2004: Vegetation and flora of North Cove, Sandy Bay and Vivian Bay, Kawau Island. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 59: 16-30.

Wilcox, M.; Young, M.; Cruickshank, G.; Millett, J. 2005: Plant records from the Swansea Bay – Mt Taylor area, Kawau Island. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 60 : 31-33.

The Florida gooseberry or tropical apricot

Mike Wilcox

Ever on the lookout for interesting trees and shrubs in Auckland, I recently came across a strange tropical fruit tree in a garden at Woodlands Park, Titirangi. The owners, Raman Lee and Alexis Dromgoole, proud new residents of Minnehaha Avenue, said they were told it was a Bermuda apricot. On tasting the sour fruit, and doing a bit of digging in reference books, I identified the tree as Florida gooseberry or tropical apricot. It is a hybrid between the Abyssinian gooseberry (*Dovyalis abyssinica*) and the Ceylon gooseberry or ketembilla (*Dovyalis hebecarpa*) that arose spontaneously in Florida in 1953, where both parent species were in cultivation. Useful accounts of *Dovyalis* can be found in Verheij & Coronel (1992), Bryant (1997), and Barwick (2004).

Azara, *Casearia*, *Flacourtia*, *Homalium*, *Idesia* and *Xylosma*.

Dovyalis abyssinica × *D. hebecarpa* has the desirable features of being largely thornless (unlike its spiny parents). It is a sprawling, vigorous and hardy shrub, bearing heavy crops of fruit, which is a berry full of pulp, with few or no seeds. They are oblate in shape, ca. 2.5 cm across, yellowish in colour, ripening to reddish-pink, soft, and covered in a thin velvety skin (Fig. 1). The star-shaped calyx is retained at the base of the fruit, and the five pistils persist as a point at the top of the fruit. They taste very acidic but are said to be good in pickles and relishes.



Fig. 1. Ripe fruit of Florida gooseberry, Woodlands Park, May 2010. Photo: Mike Wilcox.

Dovyalis was at one time in the Flacourtiaceae, but this family has now been completely subsumed in the Salicaceae (Chase et al. 2002), joining willows (*Salix*), poplars (*Populus*) and other ex-flacourts such as



Fig. 2. Foliage of Florida gooseberry, Woodlands Park, May 2010. Photo: Mike Wilcox.

The alternate leaves have entire, undulating margins, are ca. 8 cm long, shortly petiolate, attractively glossy on the upper surface, duller below, and with a