

Two areas of coastal forest in the southern Waitakere Ranges, 18 February 2012

Simon Grant and Lisa Clapperton

Jacky's Peak, Little Huia

Simon Grant

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There was a slight air of mystery to this trip when we gathered on 18 February 2012 at Little Huia. The "rather special private reserve" as described in the February-March newsletter turned out to be Jacky's Peak, a distinctive volcanic cone (148m) that juts out on the edge of the Manukau Harbour. Access to this intriguing landmark can only be obtained through the Turner family, who has owned the cone and the surrounding land since 1889. Peter Hutton had arranged permission for us to visit the reserve and we were met by members of the family at the entranceway on Whatipu Road and heard some of the history of the site (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Members of the Turner family explaining the family history at the start. Jacky's Peak beyond. Photo: Joshua Salter (JS), 18 Feb 2012.

Much of the original land that was bought by Edward Turner in 1889 is still owned by his descendents. It is a mixture of pasture and bush and still used in part for farming. Jacky's Peak (named after a family member, Jacky Marama) was set aside by the family as a private reserve in 1939 to protect it from development. It is part of a sequence of coastal forest, stretching from the Manukau Heads to Little Huia. The peak itself is approximately 10 ha, of which 5.8 ha is in bush.

Crossing a couple of paddocks, we entered the forest about a third of the way up the cone, from the western side. Kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) was a dominant canopy species, but on the fringe of the forest we saw mature tanekaha (*Phyllocladus trichomanoides*) and kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*). Kauri (*Agathis australis*) was also present – sizeable, though not exceptionally large by its own standards.

There was a coastal flavour trackside, with rengarenga lily (*Arthropodium cirratum*) hanging spectacularly from the upper banks of the track. There was also an abundance of rasp fern (*Doodia australis*), several species of maidenhair ferns (*Adiantum cunninghamii*, *A. fulvum*, *A. hispidulum*), along with kawakawa (*Macropiper excelsum*), hangehange (*Geniostoma ligustrifolium*) and rangiora (*Brachyglottis repanda*). In the rocky outcrops typical of a volcanic cone, there was *Peperomia urvilleana* and occasionally *Arthropteris tenella*.

Puriri (*Vitex lucens*) was another dominant tree of the early part of the walk (Fig.2), thriving in the relative moisture and fertility of the lower slopes. Nikau (*Rhopalostylis sapida*) and silver tree ferns (*Cyathea dealbata*) were growing in abundance, with black mamuku (*Cyathea medullaris*) occasionally sighted in the damper gullies.



Fig. 2. Peter Hutton stooping to pass beneath a large puriri over the track up Jacky's Peak. Photo: JS, 18 Feb 2012.

The track opened up as we ascended. Coastal gahnia (*Gahnia lacera*) grew thick in places on the sides of the track, but there were also a variety of other monocots, including: *Astelia banksii*, *Carex dissita*, *C. solandri*, *Dianella latissima*, *D. nigra*, *Echinopogon*

ovatus, *Microlaena stipoides*, *Oplismenus hirtellus*, *Poa anceps*, *Uncinia banksii*, *U. uncinata*. Tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa*) briefly featured as an emergent species, and there was a fine example of northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*) wrapped around a large rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*). It was about here that we encountered good specimens of Waitakere's endemic hebe, *Hebe bishopiana*, with its distinctive purplish stems and undersides of the leaves. Also noted was the delicate foliage of the west coast kowhai (*Sophora fulvida*), favouring the freely-draining slopes on the seaward side.



Fig. 3. Awhitu Peninsula and entrance to Manukau Harbour, from track to summit of Jacky's Peak. Photo: JS, 18 Feb 2012.



Fig. 4. View from Jacky's Peak, looking west to Mt Donald McLean. Photo: JS, 18 Feb 2012.

Towards the top we were welcomed by increasingly spectacular views of the Manukau Harbour (Fig. 3), Huia and the Cornwallis Peninsula. Dry tolerant, coastal plants were notable. Species included: *Carmichaelia australis*, coastal toetoe (*Austroderia splendens*), *Helichrysum lanceolatum*, wharangi (*Melicope ternata*), akepiro (*Olearia furfuracea*), coastal flax (*Phormium cookianum*), *Wahlenbergia violacea*, *Schoenus tendo*, *Rytidosperma unarede*, *Leucopogon fasciculatus* and *Leptecophylla juniperina*.

The best was for last – breathtaking views of the harbour and the ranges - time for most to sit and admire the scenery (Fig. 4). There were bench seats for those who wanted it – positioned in discreet nooks where the views were magnificent. The seats commemorated Turner family members and added a serene dignity to a perfect summer's day.

There was botanical interest too – including *Pomaderris amoena* growing profusely; some medium-sized toru (*Toronia toru*), and *Parsonsia heterophylla* in full flower. The latter was growing in the low shrubbery on mahoe (*Melicytus ramiflorus*) and karamu (*Coprosma robusta*).



Fig. 5. *Solanum betaceum* (tree tomato) sapling, near track to summit of Jacky's Peak. Photo: JS, 18 Feb 2012.

Despite this being a relatively short walk, the trip to Jacky's Peak was full of interest. A more extensive survey – especially on the seaward side – is perhaps something to consider for the future. It was heartening to see a private reserve in such good condition. The track is well maintained and there was no obvious possum damage. Weeds are, in places, more of a concern. One juvenile tree tomato (*Solanum betaceum*) with very large leaves was seen above the track (Fig. 5). Occasional invasive weeds occur in the lower track – although thankfully neither of Waitakere's common curses: kahili ginger (*Hedychium gardnerianum*) and wandering jew (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) were present. The top of the track, however, has more serious weed issues. Of particular concern are climbing asparagus (*Asparagus*

scandens) and Mexican daisy (*Erigeron karvinskianus*). At this stage they seem mostly confined to the track edges, but their potential to spread in a relatively open piece of coastal forest is considerable and should be a priority for any weed control work.

Destruction Gully

Lisa Clapperton

In the afternoon we drove along the Whatipu Road to the Destruction Gully layby, where the well-graded track made its way gently out towards the coast. Some nice specimens of *Brachyglottis kirkii* var. *angustifolia* were seen at the start of the track, along with *Alseuosmia macrophylla*. Their good health was possibly an indication of pest control work carried out in the area. At first we walked through forest containing a wide range of species typically found in poor gumland soils. The canopy was dominated by kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) and mamangi (*Coprosma arborea*), with a range of species including kauri (*Agathis australis*), Hall's totara (*Podocarpus cunninghamii*), rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), taraire (*Beilschmiedia tarairi*), hinau (*Elaeocarpus dentatus*), big-leaved mahoe (*Melicytus macrophylla*), toru (*Toronia toru*), mairehau (*Leionema nudum*) and *Dracophyllum sinclairii*. *Gahnia xanthocarpa* was common, and there were a few patches of the gumland fern, *Lindsaea linearis*, and snowberry (*Gaultheria antipoda*).

From the lookout we could see down Destruction Gully with a clear view over the canopy across the mouth of the Manukau Harbour to the steep sand cliffs of the southern head of the harbour (the Awhitu Peninsula), and with Paratutae guarding the northern entrance at Whatipu (Fig. 6). Groves of kauri rickers could be clearly seen emerging above the kanuka canopy, with swathes of nikau (*Rhopalostylis sapida*). The continuous cover of bush shows the excellent recovery the area has made from the days of logging and bush clearance.

At the lookout grew three or so *Pittosporum ellipticum* with their furry seed pods. As the ridge we



Fig. 6. View from lookout, down Destruction Gully to Makaka Bay. Paratutae Island beyond. Photo: JS, 18 Feb 2012.

were following became more defined, *Corokia buddleoides*, *C. cotoneaster*, *Libertia grandiflora*, *Dianella nigra*, *Carmichaelia australis*, *Hebe macrocarpa*, *Sophora fulvida* and *Helichrysum lanceolatum* were in evidence. A shrub of *Pittosporum cornifolium* was spotted growing on a branch of a tree.

The track steepened considerably as it dropped down to the sea at Makaka Bay, through the sweet smell of fermenting karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*) fruit. Debris washed along the track was evidence of a recent heavy rain storm. Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) grew along the coast, and there were some thickets of whau (*Entelea arborescens*). Unfortunately a number of weeds have taken advantage of the open disturbed area around the track just above the small cove, with African club-moss (*Selaginella kraussiana*), Mexican devil (*Ageratina adenophora*), Mexican daisy (*Erigeron karvinskianus*) and pampas (*Cortaderia jubata*) being the principal ones. A navigational marker is located just above the cove and evidence of an old wharf was seen in the cove; this lower section of the track has been heavily impacted over many years.

A botanical tour of Tasmania, 18-30 March 2012

Mike Wilcox (editor)

Introduction

Mike Wilcox

Continuing our series of overseas tours – New Caledonia (2003), Sydney (2009) and Norfolk Island (2010) – Auckland Bot Soc visited Tasmania, 18-30 March 2012. Our objective was to see a wide range

of habitats and plant species and to investigate the similarities and differences between the Tasmanian and New Zealand floras. March was chosen as it is usually the month with the most settled and comfortable weather, though mid-October is probably the best time to see wildflowers. Tasmania has a