

16th John Child Bryophyte Workshop, Blackball.

Report by John Steel

Thursday, 26th October, saw the Dunedin contingent of Allison Knight, Kelvin Lloyd, Maia Mistral, Anne-Marie Oliver, David Orlovich and John Steel head off for the annual bryophyte workshop this year held at the historic West Coast township of Blackball, famous for the 1908 Miners' Strike, communism, the New Zealand Labour Party, coal, gold but, most notably these days, sausages! First stop was at Timaru to view a fine *Drimys* in full bloom - and conveniently sited near the public loos! I found the new viaduct at Arthur's Pass a bit of a disappointment and was much more impressed by the continuing roadworks.

The evening was spent renewing old acquaintances and making new ones among the thirty-three participants, including several from Australia, in the bar of the Formerly the Blackball Hilton (subject of recent hostility from an international hotel chain with a similar name!). Blackball sausages were on the menu (and stayed there for the duration) and we were all well pleased with the service of our hosts, Linda and Jane.

Friday dawned bright and clear without a sandfly to be found and a great day was spent fossicking around the Croesus Track. An evening talk by Jessica Beever described the finding of a possibly rare species of *Tortella* at the nearby Brunner Mine remains as well as details of the problems of *Calyptopogon mnioides* var. *anguste-limbata* known from only the type collection from Pine Hill, Dunedin.

Saturday saw us at the top of a sunny Mt. Sewell where there was a great view of the Grey River Valley and its surrounds. One interesting find was the filmy fern, *Hymenophyllum malingii*, growing on an old stump, not *Libocedrus*, its usual haunt. On the way down, the Dunedinites stopped to hunt in the forest for fungi and some interesting finds were made to keep David happy. Then the group stopped at the Brunner mine site where it is proposed to clear the remains of any vegetation but thoughts were to be given to leave the area with the *Tortella* (which Jessica now thinks is *Tortella knightii* and not so rare after all) alone. While poking around there, the liverwort, *Asterella australis*, was found growing on some brickwork. This was a new record for it in the South Island so maybe the local historical society will be doing even less cleaning than they thought.

Sunday and again the sun shone for our trip to the limestone areas of the Bullock Track beyond Punakaiki. Philippe Gerbeaux from DoC gave an excellent talk in the evening on wetlands classification and conservation on the West Coast and mooted the possible use of bryophytes for identifying different wetland types.

The last day gave us a hint of the rain the West Coast is renowned for but by the time we arrived at the Moonlight Track it had eased and soon gave way to sunshine. We left earlier than the rest so we could help David examine some fungal processes in action - at Monteith's Brewery in Greymouth! David decided to finish the weekend in style so, after dark, we headed off up the valley and had our very own fireworks display - much to the bemusement of Mike, our local guide, who was

having a difficult enough job trying to understand why anyone would study mosses in the first place!

Tuesday saw our tired group wend its weary way home after a very pleasant and hospitable weekend. Next year, the workshop will held in the North Island so keep in mind this time next year.

Thanks To David Glenny, Geoff Spearpoint and Alan Fife for organising the workshop and to Professor Bannister of the Botany Department in Dunedin for the logistical support provided to enable Otago to be well represented once again.

Book review: Mushrooms and other fungi of New Zealand

Horne, D. 2000,
129 pp. Paper back.
Reed Books, Auckland. \$14.95.

By John Steel

This latest in the Reed New Zealand Nature Series, a new series following the format of the old Mobil New Zealand Nature Series of the 1980's, which included Marie Taylor's 'Mushrooms and Toadstools', is also pocket-sized but without the plastic jacket for outdoor use.

That is not the only difference however. After a brief introduction to the fungi, their uses and classification, there follows descriptions of eighty of the generally more common species of New Zealand fungi. With only one species to a page, the book has a spacious, uncluttered feel to it. The descriptions are clear, concise and easily comprehensible to anyone lacking prior knowledge.

Below each piece of text is a half-page, full-colour photograph and occasionally a second, full-page one for good measure. These photographs are superb and a world away from Marie Taylor's delightful coloured drawings of the earlier series.

This publication comes at a good time, with the interest in fungi aroused by our recent fungal forays and illustrated talks by David Orlovich. I have already been able to put a name to *Peziza ammophila* found among the dunes at Long Beach, and the beautiful *Conchomyces bursaeformis*, which distracted me on the fern workshop. A fine little book and an excellent introduction to a fascinating part of our flora.

Visitors to Botany Dept, Otago University:

Assoc. Prof Christo Fabricius (Rhodes University, Sth Africa). Williams Evans Fellow. Interest- Natural resource management in developing nations, social ecological systems, community conservation. 7 Dec 2000 – 20 Jan 2001.

Prof William Bond (Capetown University, Sth Africa). Hellaby Trust Fellow. Interest – Fire ecology, reproductive ecology, non-forest ecosystems. Dec 2000- Jan 2001.