

## **Hukutaia Domain Centenary 24 November 2018**

Elizabeth Miller

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2018, the centennial of Hukutaia Domain was celebrated. At 4.30 am a ceremony to unveil the new Waharoa (entrance archway) took place, after which the group of local iwi, the Hukutaia Domain Care Group, and others historically connected with the Domain moved to the large puriri, Taketakerau, an ancient burial tree, near the centre of the forest where a new plaque was unveiled. Those present reported that this occasion, in the early morning light accompanied by a dawn chorus of birds in the forest, was a moving experience.

Later in the morning at a more public ceremony at the new Waharoa, representatives of the local iwi, Upokorehe, Opotiki District Council, Bay of Plenty Regional Council and the Hukutaia Domain Care Group gave accounts of the history of the reserve and the planning and working together that led to the centenary celebration. Then members of the family of Mr E. M. Hutchinson, former owner of the property, and the Evans family, farm managers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, told their family histories regarding the Hukutaia Domain. A young Evans who, after a severe storm in 1913, was looking for a lost horse, discovered a large branch broken from the giant puriri, exposing the hollow centre which contained human bones. It seems that this history had been forgotten, and it was the first time in recent history that the role of this tree as a burial site was known.

Mr Hutchinson, a farmer based in Gisborne, but who had purchased the Woodlands property, decided at the end of World War I, that soldiers returning home could be settled on farm land if it was available, and he offered his Woodlands property to the Government for this purpose, except for land put aside for community purposes including a hospital, and the land surrounding the giant puriri, which he stipulated should be a permanent reserve. It was very interesting to hear the different family accounts of earlier times. Both families were well-represented at the occasion and were proud of the decision to reserve the bush area, which was preserved due to the foresight and generosity of one man.

A karaka tree from Jo Bonner's Coastlands Nursery was planted near the top of the drive as a memorial of the day. The tree had been grown from seed collected near the



Ceremony at the new Waharoa, at Hukutaia Domain, 24 November 2018. *Photo: Elizabeth Miller.*



The base of Taketakerau, the giant puriri, with Mike Butcher leading a botanical tour through the Hukutaia Domain. *Photo: Elizabeth Miller.*

Hutchinson farm property at Gisborne, from trees that Jo said would have originally come from Te Karaka, inland from Gisborne.

Afterwards, attendees could join a group to learn about the plants, bugs and small creatures, rongoa (traditional medicine) or timber of the native trees. Mike Butcher of the Rotorua Botanical Society, supported by Nick and Elizabeth Miller, led the plant tours, with much interest from participants. The rain that fell in the beginning of the mid-morning ceremony ceased after a while and held off most of the time people were exploring the forest and visiting Taketakerau, the giant puriri. The partly rainy day probably deterred some locals from attending, which was a pity, but there were enough people present for the day to be a success.

The Hukutaia Domain Care Group, led by John and Kay McLeod, are an enthusiastic group who have worked with the wider community including iwi to have boardwalks and signage renewed and the Waharoa completed in time for the Centenary.

Rotorua Botanical Society Newsletter Issues 2 (1984), 8 (1986), 30 (1994) and 61 (2013) include articles outlining the Domain history and past Society visits. In the 1984 report, adventive weeds including privet, fennel and blackberry are mentioned, but they were not obvious during the Centenary walks, so the Care Group is to be congratulated on the condition of the reserve. In recent years the regional council has contributed more assistance, including, since 2010, advice and materials for pest control and weed control. There are now traps targeting possums, stoats, rats and mice throughout the reserve. The increase in birds calling and nesting in the reserve has brought much joy to the Care Group, and was noted and enjoyed on the Centenary day.

Including Tim Senior, who contributed to organising the event for the regional council and provides support to the Care Group, Jo Bonner, who supports the Care Group over choice and supply of suitable plants for planting projects, as well as Mike Butcher, and Nick and Elizabeth Miller, five members of the Rotorua Botanical Society were present to help celebrate the centenary of this remarkable place.



Part of the Domain's thriving colony of *Myosotis pottsii*, named after Norman Potts, a major contributor to the development of the Hukutaia Domain in its early days. *Photo: Elizabeth Miller.*

## **Okareka mistletoe restoration project**

### **Weed control/plant releasing work day for 2019**

Come and join Rotorua Botanical Society to control weeds threatening mistletoe sites and plant new host trees. Activities will involve hand-pulling, cutting, sawing of vines, climbers and small trees.

**When: Sat 12 October – Weed control/plant releasing  
work day**

**Meet: Cnr Summit and Loop Roads (lake end) @ 8:45 am**  
**Grade: medium-hard – activities suitable for all ages  
and abilities will be provided**

**Please contact the organiser Paul Cashmore  
027 650 7264 (mob) or 07 349 7432 (work) to RSVP.**  
**Equipment to bring will be advised.**