Native vegetation at Ann's Creek, Southdown, July 1992

R.O. Gardner

Maungarei (Mt Wellington) is the second-youngest of Auckland's volcanic centres. A flow of lava from here headed southwest against the Barrack Road-Penrose Road sandstone ridge, ponded at Penrose, then overflowed southeastwards between Mt Smart and the continuation of the sandstone (Bailey's Hill-Hamlin's Hill) to reach the corner of the Manukau Harbour as a sea-frontage c. 350 m wide and almost 1 km long. Ann's Creek, which comes from Hamlin's Hill and the Westfield (Mt Richmond) tuff ring, has its mouth along this frontage.

In 1905 the Southdown Freezing Works was built a short way inland here on the Mt Smart flow, but the rough-surfaced Ann's Creek lava remained undeveloped, except for railway construction, until c. 1986 when landfill of inner parts of it began.

This recent landfilling has occurred in two places, one between the end of Hugo Johnson Drive and the Auckland-Wellington railway line, the other immediately to the east, between the railway and Great South Road. Of course the vegetation that used to occur in these places, mostly on the inner slopes of large hollows, has been obliterated.

However, principally in the eastern area, from about the line of the high-tension wires south to the mangroves, there still remains much of that native vegetation that I knew here prior to 1986, for example, numerous akeake (Dodonaea viscosa), and Coprosma crassifolia (for which this area is the type locality). The area is overrun by blackberry and smilax as well as by shrubby weeds like flannel-leaf and boneseed, but no doubt most of the native plants formerly known to me (see species list below) still remain.

Some but not all of these plants can be seen along the foreshore walkway back west to Waikaraka Park.

In view of the fact that this area is probably the city's only remaining significant piece of lava flow vegetation (an area near Merton Road may still have a few scattered native individuals) I have strongly recommended to the Auckland City Council that it be preserved.

Native Plants: total 46 species.

Ferns

Adiantum hispidulum
Asplenium flabellifolium
A. flaccidum ssp. flaccidum
Cheilanthes distans
C. sieberi
Doodia media
Pellaea rotundifolia
Phymatosorus diversifolius
Pteridium aquilinum var. esculentum
Pyrrosia eleagnifolia

Dicot shrubs

Avicennia marina var. resinifera
Coprosma crassifolia
C. repens
C. robusta
Corokia cotoneaster (1 plant seen, died in '80s)
Dodonaea viscosa
Leptospermum scoparium
Melicytus ramiflorus
Plagianthus divaricatus
Pomaderris phylicifolia var. ericifolia
Olearia solandri

Dicot herbs

Acaena novae-zelandiae
Epilobium cinereum

Cotula coronopifolia
Crassula tetramera
Cyathodes fraseri
Dichondra repens
Disphyma australe
Geranium retrorsum
G. solanderi
Samolus repens
Sarcocornia quinqueflora

Monocots

Astelia banksii
Baumea juncea
Carex flagellifera
C. virgata
Carex sp., ? C. geminata
Cordyline australis
Cyperus ustulatus
Juncus australis
J. maritimus var. novae-zelandiae
Leptocarpus similis
Scirpus cernuus
S. nodosus
S. sp., ? S. fluviatilis
Triglochin striatum
Typha orientalis

Whitebait to White Paint: Maher Swamp, on the Barrytown lowland (North Westland), its history and prospect

R.O. Gardner

South of Punakaiki, at about latitude 42° 10' S, the rugged coastline is relieved by a 17 km long stretch of lowland, the Barrytown flats. Gold-mining began early here and the drier pieces of topography have long been cleared for pasture, but at least to a northerner's eye the flats still have substantial pieces of tall forest, good stands of kahikatea, flourishing groves of nikau, and extensive wetlands. One senses that the area is a haven, not only for plants and wildlife but for the humans too in the couple of dozen farms and cottages and in the small settlement of Barrytown, which consists principally of the "All Nations" tavern. This balance may change in the near future, with the preliminary phases of a very large-scale mining venture nearly completed, and it is the purpose of this article to describe something of the history of the landscape and its salient botanical features.

The area is composed of post-glacial coastal and river deposits that have built up between the greywacke headland of 17-Mile Bluff in the south and the limestone and sandstone cliffs of Razorback Point in the north. Its largest river, Canoe Creek, passes more or less across at the middle of this area, where there is a major fault trending diagonally inland. The part of the flats south of Canoe Creek is being raised relative to the northern half, so in the south the post-glacial cliff is poorly defined and steep hills of granite and greywacke rise above a narrow terrace of Pleistocene alluvium, while north of Canoe Creek a broader flight of Pleistocene terraces is evident and the higher ground inland is of older limestone and sandstone. Consequently, coastal deposits in the north have an abundance of sand, while those of the south are largely of coarse greywacke and granite materials. The northerly long-shore drift along this coast accentuates this bipartite division and so the northern topography is one of low sandy ridges with wide intervening swampy areas, while the southern half is higher, having coarse alluvial fans that spill out of the range front at a maximum altitude of c. 60 m at Canoe Creek and at Barrytown settlement on the Granite Creek fan.

There are considerable amounts of gold in sandy leads within the