

WAERENGA 16 May 1964 - - - M. Todd

Rain!! - - Undaunted, a full force of members, with hopeful hearts, filled the bus. It sped south to the rolling hills and green valleys of the Waikato, some 50 miles away. Turning off to TeKauwhata and past the tip of Lake Waikare, we entered the lovely valley of Waerenga. Here we were to spend the rest of the day on the property of Mr. Cozens.

The startling effect of trees with their colourful autumn foliage drew gasps from us, as we twisted down the lanes to reach our destination. Well shod, as the rain lay heavy on the lush grasses of the fields, we ambled round the gardens of the homestead. Every pathway opened up a new vista of delight and interest - so many and varied were the shrubs and trees that Mr. Cozens had acquired, planted and nursed to maturity.

Lunch was a happy picnic affair under the trees, in and around the summer-house, and on the lawn. Well fortified, and with the sun breaking through to give us the full glory of the magnificent foliage of the trees, we set off up the gentle slopes of the farmland. Fenced off in a valley on the hills, lies the work of 40 years. An ardent lover of native flora, Mr. Cozens has regenerated this area into a very beautiful, and intensely interesting native bush reserve. A stream falls from the higher slopes to different levels through the bush, forming a pond at the entrance. And here two graceful black swans glide and call all through the day. The true atmosphere of an established bush is felt as one sets foot on the soft leafmould of the paths which wind away on either side of the stream, under a fine canopy of very healthy trees. Ferns edge the banks by the water, higher up pools are formed and paths crisscross over the stream, giving in all a sense of vastness to the area, which is not really great.

And still Mr. Cozens plants on. New trees on the outer edge had been recently staked against the strong westerlies. The view from the fence line gave us the rich valley below, and on the surrounding hills grew the tall pines of the State Forests. Later that day we were to experience a climb through these self same trees, with still more magnificent views, but that was even a surprise to ourselves. We weren't supposed to be there, and upon finding our mistake hurriedly retreated, much to our relief.

Homeward bound and happy with our day, we felt grateful to our host Mr. Cozens, for his generosity in giving us the freedom of his grounds and his personal guidance.

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