

PLACES TO VISITHUKUTAI Domain - OPOTIKIA.J. DAKIN

A visit to the Opotiki district could not be deemed truly satisfying to the botanist and plant lover without spending a few hours at Hukutai Domain - a pleasant area of native forest a few miles from Opotiki township.

Indeed, one visit would hardly be sufficient to take in and examine the multitude of native plants growing on this small area of land. For this reason (and the fact that new plants are constantly being added) a return visit is a must.

Over a period of more than forty years, plantings of New Zealand ferns, herbs, shrubs and trees have been made in the Domain, these being obtained from all parts of the country. These plants, together with the natural forest covering, make this a place of more than passing interest to the plant lover.

Some background information on the Domain may be of interest:-

The Domain is administered by the Opotiki County Council through an honorary and advisory domain committee consisting of seven to eight persons.

The Domain was gazetted in 1918 when a large sheep station was divided up to provide rehabilitation farms - some $11\frac{1}{2}$ acres were put aside as a Domain, this being tawa/puriri forest. Fortunately at this time, efforts by an enterprising settler to have the Domain incorporated in his own holdings were forestalled.

In 1920 the domain advisory committee was formed, and this committee provided fencing and maintenance until 1925-26, when Mr Norman Potts of Opotiki, an amateur botanist, became closely involved with the committee and commenced the collecting of plants from various areas of New Zealand, and the planting of these at the Domain.

This work was indeed a labour of love for the flora of New Zealand, and the results of his early collections are manifest in some splendid specimens today, some of which are quite rare in nature.

Plantings by Mr Potts were essentially a one man effort until his death, and as a tribute to this work a memorial gate and stone wall were erected at the Domain entrance and opened by Mrs Potts and her family on 17th June, 1972.

During recent years the present domain committee has continued the work and has enthusiastically collected and maintained plants and provided further facilities.

A member of the committee, Mr Marc Heginbotham has travelled extensively over the past few years in the North Island

gathering additional plants to fill in gaps in the collections and to provide new subjects. As recently as January of this year a catalogue of plants in the Domain, together with their location, was compiled by Mr. Heginbotham and Mr. A.E. Esler of Auckland. This catalogue shows the scope and range of plants present, both of local origin and those introduced over the years.

The following will give some idea of the number of plants present in the Domain at January 1973:-

FERNS & FERN ALLIES	-	100
MONOCOTYLEDONS	-	70
GYMNOSPERMS	-	20
DICOTYLEDONS	-	<u>430</u>
TOTAL		620 species and varieties.

The Domain is well provided with graded tracks and the native tawa, puriri, rewarewa and nikau provide cool canopy cover. Grassy openings beside the tracks are planted with many of the collected plants, these 'newcomers' growing happily with their neighbours of longer standing. Indeed, it is a source of amazement to see plants from such a diversity of locations and habitats (outlying islands, coastal, forests and shrublands, montane and sub-alpine, warm northern areas and cool southern zones) all growing apace, in what must be to many, very strange surroundings.

A pleasant rockery at the entrance exhibits many plants of the montane and sub-alpine zones of our mountains. Considerable skill is needed to keep some of these alive in a warmer and more humid environment.

A large hollow puriri of historical interest is situated near the centre of the Domain, and was used as a burial place by the Npokerere, a sub tribe of the Whakatakeā.

Hukutaia Domain is then a place of varied interest, nurtured by nature and by people with a love for our native plants - indeed, a place worthy of not just one visit but of several.

RECENT OBSERVATIONS

Mrs K. WOOD.

On a recent visit to Price's Valley on Banks Peninsula I was introduced to a divaricating shrub which was quite new to me, Teucrium parvifolium. It is a plant which we do not see growing in Auckland, although its range is from Whangaroa to Balclutha. I note that no mention was made of it in the account of the Auckland Botanical Society's 1971 trip to Banks Peninsula, and also that Mr. Butler