GORE BAY AND PORT ROBINSON - MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

By R. Mason

At the south end of Gore Bay, which lies about ten miles south-east of Cheviot, deep bush-clad gullies run towards the coast, and it was on the vegetation at the lower end of the gully running down from the well-known Cathedral Rocks and that on the cliffs behind the settlement that I based the brief account in "The Vegetation of the Coast" in "The Natural History of Canterbury". This area has recently been made a reserve and new tracks make the vegetation much more accessible.

During a walk up Cathedral Gully and down through the adjacent northern one this February the following points were noted:

Blechnum procerum: Two kinds occur. In the lower ends of the gullies all plants have wedge-shaped fronds with long lower pinnae. This is the form illustrated in later editions of Dobbie's "New Zealand Ferns" as found by Carse on the Manukau Harbour; it is found as far south as Motunau. Higher up the gullies all plants are of the normal form in which the lower pinnae become more distant, rounder and ultimately very short.

Fuchsia excorticata: Previously I saw only one or two dead trunks, but in the upper part of Cathedral Gully are several tall slender specimens up to ten feet high and some others much smaller.

Leptospermum scoparium: Towards the upper end of Cathedral Gully where it is more open is a single specimen of this teatree with a fairly short but extremely stout trunk, six feet in girth near the base.

Astelia fragrans: is abundant, especially in the more northern gully, and in February it was in full fruit, making a magnificent display.

Podocarpus totara: One specimen about 8 feet high grows in the northern gully. According to Mr. Wilson, who until recently was farming in the district and who is now caretaker of the camping ground, totara forest once covered the hills inland of Gore Bay and he was familiar with old relic logs.

In 1958 and 1960 there was as fine a growth of the mistletoe Tupeia antarctica as one would wish to find, great clumps perching on all the many tree lucernes in the camping ground. Today all those tree lucernes and their mistletoes are gone, but Tupeia is still present in the Bay.

Only two specimens of taupata (Coprosma repens) were seen in those earlier years, one perched on the upper edge of the gorge and a large shrub at the south end of the bay by the shore. Today around the settlement there are numbers of mature shrubs, some at least self sown, and many saplings and seedlings certainly self sown. One shrub grows by the road that climbs by the south of Cathedral Gully. In the Botany Division Herbarium is a specimen collected in 1966, probably from that seen by the shore in 1958, with a note saying that it was apparently an escape from a hedge. The present day hedges all appear younger than the 1958 shrub.

Many years ago a road from Gore Bay lead south at the base of the steep cliffs to Port Robinson and climbed at the south end of the port to

the point north of Manuka Bay. Traces of this road are still evident to the south but it is completely washed away near Gore Bay and these days the best access is by a steep rough road which approaches direct to the middle of the very shallow bay. Before the railway penetrated north, Port Robinson quite overshadowed Gore Bay as it gave access to Cheviot (Mackenzie) and the surrounding country, and 70 to 80 years ago boasted a harbourmaster and an assistant. The port, graced by ramps and a shed and used by a few fishing boats, is backed by steep slopes with small pockets of bush in gullies. The bush, though not a reserve, is described by G. Kelly in the Lands & Survey Department compilation of the Canterbury Reserves. Listed therein is Cotyledon orbiculata. This a tall handsome succulent with thick, roundish, broad, opposite grey leaves and a cluster of drooping, reddish-orange flowers at the top of a tall stout stalk. It is abundant on the small rocky outcrops and clayey faces apparently from one end of the port to the other. So far as I know Port Robinson is the only locality where this species has become naturalised and it must have escaped from gardens many years ago.

On the flat at the south end of the port, lining either side of the road before it descends to Manuka Bay, are hedges of ngaio (Myoporum laetum) which shelter a number of native plants. A few of these may have been planted but mostly they are colonisers from the nearby bushy gullies. The hedge on the north side has been pollarded and is more open of the two and the colonisers are fewer :- akeake (Dodonaea viscosa), matipo (Myrsine australis), black matipo (Pittosporum tenuifolium), and a kowhai (Sophora microphyllum). Two specimens of a bronze, tri-foliate Pseudopanax are presumably planted. The other hedge is denser and unpollarded. In its shelter beside matipo, black matipo, and kowhai grow koromiko (Hebe salicifolia), cabbage tree (Cordyline australis), karamu (Coprosma robusta), fivefinger (Pseudopanax arboreum), kawakawa (Macropiper excelsum), two totaras, Helichrysum glomeratum, Olearia paniculata, O. avicennaefolia, pohuehue (Muehlenbeckia complexa) and Astelia fragrans. Three specimens of pohutukawa may have been planted or be self sown from a tree near the front gate of the nearby house. Much Haloragis erecta grows under both hedges, as do various grasses and adventive herbs.

TYPHA SEEDLINGS

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In a recent paper Sharma and Gopal (1978)* report the widespread occurrence of Typha seedlings within natural stands of Typha in the states of Uttar Pradesh, India. This is of interest for as these authors note, although Typha plants produce countless seeds, seedlings have "rarely been reported in nature and never from the vicinity of Typha stands". This comment applies to Typha (T. orientalis) in New Zealand which depends upon stout underground rhizomes to form the dense stands so familiar to us. I have seen Typha seedlings twice, once at Lake Horowhenua, west of Levin, and in the same year in a now much reduced swamp at Raumai about 25 km north-east of Palmerston North.