

Fernglen Native Plant Gardens

Winter Newsletter 2013



Contents :

- 1. Invitation to Muriel's commemorative celebration**
- 2. News from Fernglen**
- 3. A Look Back in History: Alan Cunningham , early botanist**
- 4. NZ native plants growing in the South of France**
- 5 A return to Driving Creek Railway**
- 6 Book Review: Pioneering Life and the Kauri Tree by Sarah Charles and Keith Hodgson**
- 7 Metrosideros Parkinsonii**
- 8 Native Ferns featured on our postage stamps**

MURIEL FISHER MEMORIAL



SUNDAY, 28TH JULY, 2PM-4PM

**PLEASE COME TO A COMMEMORATION OF
MURIEL'S LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS AT
FERNGLEN GARDEN'S.**

**UNVEILING OF PLAQUE AND FERNERY
DEVELOPMENT IN HER HONOUR.**

AFTERNOON TEA, GUIDED TOUR, AND FERN LECTURE



2. News From Fernglen

Curators report by Malcolm Fisher:

The Auckland Council “Education for Sustainability” coordinator Sarah Sheehan, along with her team of environmental educators, is in the planning stage of a pilot programme. We hope to see Fernglen incorporated into this superb organisation that provides classes at Arataki, The Botanical Gardens, Long Bay, and Ambury Farm Park. Fernglen education centre has been the site of several meetings with educators and council representatives over the past couple of months. The first classes are expected to trial in the forth term this year. Watch this space!

The NZ Institute of Horticulture held it’s AGM at the centre at the beginning of May thanks to Nev for giving a guided tour before the meeting. Also, thanks to the institute for your donation

The Parnell Garden club also visited in May enjoying viewing the Fernglen DVD before touring the garden which unfortunately did not include time for Ben’s Ridge. They kindly left a donation

Aristobulo Maranta from Argentina volunteered at the gardens during his holiday here. He kindly donated a beautiful book on National Parks in Argentina. Although in Spanish the Latin names translate well and the photography speaks a thousand words.

Some trees have had their roots weakened by the extremes of wet and dry weather. Several kanuka have fallen in the vicinity of the fernery. The mature lancewood near the pool in the old rockery fell down last week. It broke quite a bit of the nearby *Elingamita johnsonii* which is part of the off- shore island collection. The yellow flowering pohutukawa which overhangs the road just above the main entrance descended closer to the road. The council contactors have done a good job reducing the load on the tree. Despite the few casualties, generally plants are flourishing in the mild wet weather suggesting the drought has had little impact on Fernglen

The drought has reduced the glow worm population with only a few dozen shining where previously there were hundreds.

Steve and Malcolm from the Fernglen committee assisted Mike Wilcox of the Auckland Botanical Society in showing local reserves to the 24 members of the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network (NZPCN) touring Auckland’s interesting volcanic, coastal, regenerating and mature kauri parks.

Currently flowering:

Tecomanthe speciosa

Hebe bishopiana

Hebe latisepala,

Hebe macrocarpa var *brevifolia*

Dracophyllum strictum.

Elingamita johnsonii. is sporting lots of cardinal-red berries below the alpine house

Newly purchased plants:

Gingida montana- Mountain carrot

Hebe epacridea

Hebe pubescens- Coromandel hebe

Olearia nummulariflora – Tree daisy

Pellaea falcata-

Pseudowintera axillaris- Horpito

Ranunculus acaulis- Buttercup

Olearia arborescens

Pittosporum dalli

New ferns:

Adiantum hookerian

Adiantum diaphanum

Blechnum blechnoides

Blechnum filiforme

Davallia tasmanii

Asplenium lyallii

Asplenium lamprophyllum

Hymenophyllum demissum

Hymenophyllum scabrum

Hymenophyllum dilatatum



Elingamita johnsonii

Kind permission Peter de Lange

[Hhttp://www.nzpcn.org.nz](http://www.nzpcn.org.nz)

Condolences: Fernglen Committee extends our condolences to the Metge Family. Sarah Metge long time friend and generous patron of Fernglen, sadly passed away on Monday 10th June. A garden dedicated to Sarah is at the entrance to Fernglen. Her colourful life as a teacher in Northland has been documented in her autobiography. “Te Mahita - A Lifetime in Teaching”. Her final teaching position was at Birkenhead Primary . As a local figure she will be sadly missed.





3. A Look Back In History: Allan Cunningham, Early Botanist (1781-1839)

As a young law student Allan Cunningham found his studies exceptionally dull. He decided on a change and applied for a position as a clerk at the newly established Kew Gardens in London. The son of a head gardener, he quickly established a passion for plants. In 1884 director of Kew Gardens Joseph Banks, decided on an expedition to the Southern Hemisphere, Australia in particular. There was a “harvest of plants waiting to be gathered for Kew.” Two plant collectors were sent, and one of the chosen was Allan Cunningham. The first collections were made in Brazil, following on to Australia. From Sydney, Cunningham made numerous explorations into the interior, enduring great hardship on his quest for new plants for both Kew and the Sydney Gardens.

In 1826, Cunningham took a passage on an Indian Whaler bound for Kororareka, to a land with “no law and no order”. Fortunately, Cunningham established friendships with the local Maori. He recorded them to be fellow plant lovers and they were prepared to guide him through dense forests. On his first expedition he admired the rich abundance of ferns; the magnificent *Loxoma cunninghamii* was later named in his honour. He expressed interest in our tree fuchsia, *Fuchsia excorticata*, previously having



Fuchsia excorticata
<http://www.hebesoc.org/nz>

observed Fuchsia in Brazil. Near the Kerikeri falls he discovered the genus *Alseuosmia* with its bright crimson flowers and delicate fragrance, and he later named one of the species in honour of Joseph Banks.

Cunningham spent close to a year botanising in Northern New Zealand, living with Maori and missionaries at various stations. By the time he

eventually left New Zealand for Sydney he had assembled a considerable collection of plant and seed material. After seventeen years in Australia and New Zealand he journeyed back to England. During his 6 year return to England he compiled “A Flora of our Islands”. After his brother’s death, he returned to Sydney succeeding him as the Government Botanist of Sydney Gardens. A post he resigned after a year, in protest at having to grow vegetables. He made a brief plant collecting trip to the Bay of Islands in 1839, where his health deteriorated. He died of tuberculosis after returning to Sydney later that year.



Loxoma cunninghamii Dr. Lawrence Jensen <http://www.nzplants.ac.nz>



Alseuosmia banksii Phil Bendle Photographer www.terrain.co.nz

Interestingly, younger brother Richard Cunningham 1793-1835 was also drawn to similar pursuits. He worked at Kew cataloguing his brother's collection for eighteen years. He was appointed the Colonial Botanist at Sydney gardens in 1833 on his brother's recommendation. In this position he travelled to New Zealand in 1834 to report on Kauri for naval spars. Here he discovered a new fuchsia near Whangaroa, *Fuchsia procumbens*. On the south side of the Hokianga Harbour he



Hebe speciosa kind permission
photographer Andrea Brandon
<http://www.nzpcn.org.nz>

found a small shrub with spectacular reddish- purple flowers he named *Veronica speciosa* now known as *Hebe speciosa*. Richard disappeared during an exploration in the Darling River area, he was known to stray while botanising and have poor bush sense. On this occasion he was killed by fearful aboriginals, possibly whilst delirious.



RICHARD CUNNINGHAM.

4. New Zealand native plants growing in the South of France

Recently we received correspondence from Le Jardin des Antipodes, in Menton France. (Menton is on the Mediterranean near the Italian border). It included a request for our newsletter and seeds of *Elatostema rugosum* (Parataniwha). Catherine Stewart who has visited Fernglen twice over the years has obviously been very busy developing a New Zealand garden in the South of France. She described her success in developing the mini- gardens of Three Kings Island, Northland, Kauri, Rotorua, Heaphy, Coastal plants, and Lord Howe Island. She has had favourable results cultivating kohekohe, totara, kauri, pisonia, entelea, freycinetia, elingamita, puka, macropiper, tecomanthe, muehlenbeckia, clematis and others. What an amazing collection of our natives in the Northern Hemisphere! It is fitting that it is in Menton, where Katherine Mansfield wrote some of her famous short stories in 1919-1920. Many New Zealand writers now take a writers residency there, courtesy of the Menton Fellowship established in 1970. The connection with France concerning our flora goes back to the influx of French botanists in the early 19th century. D'Urville, Lesson, and Raoul all spent considerable time botanising in New Zealand. In 1832 *Essai d'une flore de la Nouvelle Zeland*, was published by eminent French botanist Achille Richard and Adolphe Lesson It described 379 species of plants reported by d'Urville at the time of his voyage on the *Astrolabe*.





Art
Conservation
Engineering

5. A Return to Driving Creek Railway

Having visited Driving Creek Railway at regular intervals since it opened to the public in 1990, it has been fascinating to observe the progress of the native re-vegetation programme that Barry Brickell began in 1973. Over 27,000 trees and shrubs, including a phenomenal 9,000 kauri have been planted. Considering the exceptionally dry summer I was pleasantly surprised to observe minimal drought damage. Most amazing was the survival of young kauri. Almost 100% success for a tree that is susceptible to dry summers in its early years. Presumably the regenerating bush is now sufficient to protect the newly planted trees. Young rimu also appeared healthy despite their susceptibility to exceptionally dry conditions.

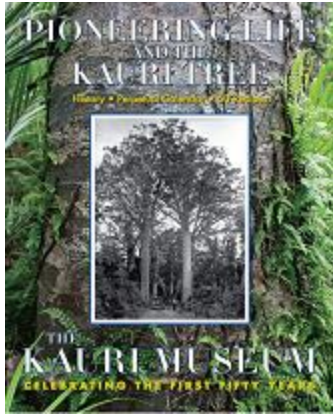
The vegetation as you travel 165m above sea level along the narrow gauge railway to the “Eyeful Tower” is now maturing and regenerating through natural dispersal from earlier plantation. The 22 hectares of regenerating bush is in stark contrast to the surrounding land. The method used to remove old pine trees from the property is interesting. Rather than felling and damaging the surrounding vegetation, the pine trees are ring-barked and allowed to slowly die, dropping branches in the immediate vicinity.

One ongoing problem not specific to Driving Creek is the death of mature mamuku-*Cyathea medullaris*. Sudden death of this tree can be related to dry summers but may also be a random occurrence. A graphic demonstration of mamuku die back can be seen on State Highway 1, near Pohuehue Bridge South of Warkworth. Many dead mamuku are visible among very healthy tree ferns- figure that out!

If you are visiting the Coromandel Peninsula a visit to Driving Creek Railway is strongly recommended. It is a tribute to the vision and labour of Barry Brickell potter, train enthusiast, and conservationist. An example of Barry’s pottery planted with epiphytes can be seen at Fernglen near the pergola beside the education centre.



6. Book Review: Pioneering Life and the Kauri Tree by Sarah Charles and Keith Hodgson



This gem of a book celebrates 50 years of the Kauri Museum at Matakōhe. With over 300 photographs, the story of the kauri tree is comprehensively explained. It covers the process from the felling of the trees, through the timber industry, the gum digging trade, and the experience a new life on the land and sea for the early settlers in the Kaipara. It is interestingly written in a calendar format with chapters of activities from January to December, and a diary of important birthdays, anniversaries and special occasions in the district. It even includes fifty recipes from

the descendants of early pioneers.

For those who have visited the Matakōhe Museum this is no doubt “preaching to the converted” For those who have yet to visit, and are curious about New Zealand History, this is a high priority for your “bucket list”. Situated in the “middle of nowhere” on the road to Dargaville this is probably the most significant rural museum in New Zealand. The gum room houses the largest collection of kauri gum with over 20,000 specimens. The Tudor Collins wing is home to a superb collection to photographs from the famous kauri industry photographer Tudor Collins. The Sterling wing presents 6 rooms furnished with original decor, kauri furniture, and accessories, enhanced with life-like mannequins.

While not the usual botanical book review this publication contextualises and explains the kauri industry which has had ecological and historic impact upon the development of New Zealand. Publications that record the past so vividly are to be cherished as so often the photographs and artefacts can be lost. The novelty of the calendar approach is really effective as a timeless record and a memento of the museum.



7. *Metrosideros parkinsonii*

This plant was first located in 1882 in the hills near Collingwood by Henry Travers a Nelson botanist. It gave botanist John Buchanan the opportunity to name a plant after Sydney Parkinson the chief artist on Cook's first voyage to New Zealand. Amazingly a specimen was discovered on Great Barrier Island years later, and again in 1959 on Little Barrier Island. To complicate the already bizarre distribution pattern, plants have been discovered on the west coast of the South Island near Greymouth and Hokitika. Therefore in broad terms Parkinson's rata is known to have two separate populations 500km apart! A small tree it grows in variety of sites and conditions- from 60- 1000m above sea level. While favouring rocky poor quality low fertility soils, it can also grow in wet poorly drained forest. Often growing as an understory plant beneath beech, rimu, kamahi, or southern rata, it also has a range of growth forms. In an understory situation, it has an untidy spreading habit, yet in an open situation it forms a small tree of up to 7m. Deep red flowering occurs in spring and summer. A plant preferring cool moist infertile soils *Metrosideros parkinsonii* is not easy to cultivate, and we have failed twice and Fernglen to grow this contrary plant.



Metrosideros parkinsonii Geoff Davidson photographer

<http://www.nzpcn.org.nz>

8. Native Ferns featured on our postage stamps



On February the 7th this year New Zealand Post issued a set of 5 stamps featuring native ferns :

70c *Asplenium bulbiferum*,

\$1.40 *Cardiomanes reniforme*,

\$1.90 *Blechnum colensoi*

\$2.40 *Sticherus cunninghamii*

\$2.90 *Cyathea dealbata*. An interesting selection from our 194 species of fern and

18 species of fern allies. I would assume they have been chosen for their significant differences. Of interest is the naming of the \$1.40 kidney fern as a *Cardiomanes reniforme*. This was re classified quite some time ago as *Trichomanes reniforme* and more recently as *Hymenophyllum nephrophyllum*. The stamps are superbly crafted and will hopefully spur interest in these wonderful plants.