

DAY TRIP TO MT AROWHANA - DECEMBER 1975M. HEGINBOTHAM

It was a calm, cloudless day when our party of four left Opotiki at 5.30 a.m. to climb Mt Arowhana. The 100 mile car drive to the foot of the mountain took exactly three hours and covered a variety of scenery. The first 45 miles to Matawai along Highway 2 passed through the Waioueka Gorge with its unsurpassed splendour of indigenous forest clad hills and magnificent river views, then through hilly open country of sheep and cattle farms down to the rich cropping areas of the flats. A few miles before Te Karaka we turned north and travelled the six miles to the small settlement of Whatatutu. Altitude above sea level at the turnoff was 100 feet, at Whatatutu 300 feet and our 20 mile journey along the metalled Tarndale Road to the mountain base was a gradual, winding climb to 2900 feet.

The road traverses land of the large 'Mangatu Block' and the equally large Mangatu State Forest. The former land belongs to Maori shareholders, comprises many farms, and is successfully administered by an organization in Gisborne; the forest area is of exotic pines planted to control the erosion and movement of the 'papa' slopes, besides being an economically viable industry as well. As we passed through this country, steadily climbing in the stillness of the morning, the only movement seemed to be rabbits scurrying and magpies darting away. At 1600 feet we stopped to inspect the renowned Tarndale slip covering hundreds of acres on either side of the road and still sliding and subsiding. Continuing on past the pine plantations, farmland and some indigenous forest remnants we came to more open grassland littered with the burnt-out skeletons of the former forest; stumps and logs of beech were everywhere. At last we came to Arowhana Station at 2800 feet - a collection of buildings and yards with a flock of sheep also in evidence. A little way past here we turned left onto a well formed, dry weather road recently constructed by the Forestry Service. Before us rose the mountain, majestic against the background of clear blue sky, and sitting serenely amid the grassland pastures of Arowhana and Mangaotane Stations ( part of Mangatu Block ). On either side of the carpark area were the sources of two watercourses - to the north-east the Mata River which meanders its way to the coast near Ruatoria; and the Mangaotane Stream which travels westwards to join the mighty Motu River that flows down to the coast near Maraenui.

The main object of the exercise for me was to record the various indigenous plants I saw on the mountain, with the approximate altitude where each species was first encountered, and to give some indication of species abundance over the whole area travelled. So with boots on, packs checked and a cup of coffee within, we started off with the hour at 9 a.m. The first part of the climb was along well-worn sheep tracks, skirting old beech stumps and logs, in pasture grassland rising gradually at about 30 degrees. We were following a ridge which was to continue to the mountain top. It was obvious that fire had engulfed the south and east of the mountain in bygone days when most of the surrounding land was being cleared for farming. Indigenous plants were minimal in quantity in this grassland zone, particularly on the southern slopes which dropped away into the Mangaotane valley. Perhaps here such ferns as Polystichum vestitum,

Histiopteris incisa, two Blechnums and the two white-flowering Helichrysums and Curisias were the plants most seen. On the northerly slopes of the ridge which descended to the Mata River, far more plants were in evidence though these were 'second growth' and consisted largely of Hebe, Fuchsia, Coprosma, horopito and mountain cabbage trees, with a few beech trees popping up now and then.

At 3400 feet the pasture grassland ceased and we began to climb steep, rocky slopes with grades varying between 40 and 60 degrees. From this point more herbs and smaller shrubs were apparent, together with abundant grasses, Chionochloa conspicua and Poa anceps, and Lycopodiums. A number of Pseudopanax laetus shrubs were seen, as well as Olearia colensoi, Olearia arborescens and Senecio elaeagnifolius, many of these sited on steep, untouchable rock cliffs. At 4400 feet we came to a narrow rocky bridge-like section of the ridge, where particular care was needed as almost vertical drops were on each side. Here I saw the first specimen of the dainty Parahebe olsenii and also, incidentally, the first silhouetted view of Mt Hikurangi's profile some 17 miles to the north-east. At 4500 feet and 11 o'clock I came upon the first Coprosma pseudocuneata surrounded by leatherwood, Gaultheria paniculata, Hebe stricta var. lata, Myrsine divaricata, Dracophyllum adamsii and other alpenes. From here it was a more gradual rise through tussocks, sedges and koromikos to the mountain top of around 4700 feet. On the southern fringe here stands a T.V. translator mast and equipment, surrounded by leatherwood, Chionochloa pallens var., Astelia fragrans, Celmisia spectabilis, Gahnia procera etc. Magnificent views could be had of the surrounding country below as well as to distant spots. Points of interest clearly visible were - to the south, Young Nick's Head in Poverty Bay about 50 miles away; to the west, the Matata beaches and Whale Island off Whakatane ( over 50 miles and 40 miles distant ); then to the east, the sea horizon out from Tokomaru Bay ( c. 40 miles out ).

The top of Mt Arowhana is more or less a plateau of around 10 acres with perhaps half this area consisting of alpine bog, fairly dry on the surface at this time but very wet beneath. Cushions of comb sedge, Oreobolus pectinatus, were everywhere, along with tussocks, Lycopodiums, Gahnia and other sedges. In small clumps were Dacrydium bidwillii and D. biforme with D. laxifolium nearby, while more on the perimeter were tangled masses of leatherwood, Coprosmas and Hebes. It took me half an hour to wander across this area to reach the Trig Station at 4724 feet at the northern end. Here we had lunch, as we examined the north and western panorama through binoculars. The land dropped steeply away to the north and west of the mountain and was covered largely with dense forest, much of it beech. Two cleared areas within the forest were visible to the north-west - the Maungawaru Plateau of c. 4600 feet and the smaller 'Scots Selection' clearing of c. 4000 feet, both places worthy of attention.

Further study of the mountain top in brilliant sunshine engaged another hour or so, after which at about 1.30 p.m. we commenced the descent. With no further recording to do, few plants to collect, it took only 1½ hours to reach the car from the T.V. mast area. Once again some coffee, boots off, packs and plants packed away, and off at 3.30 p.m. on the homeward journey to arrive safely in Opotiki at 6.45 after an enjoyable, full and rewarding day.

Plants seen on Mt Arowhana in order of first sighting, with altitude readings, and abundance figures for the complete climb are as follows:-

- r. ----- rare; 1 - 5 plants only.  
 o. ----- occasional; species with few individuals  
 m. ----- many; too numerous to count but not abundant.  
 p. ----- plentiful; species seen in many places in fairly high numbers.

3150 feet: grassland area

<i>Acaena anserinifolia</i>	p	<i>Schefflera digitata</i>	m
<i>Hydrocotyle novae-zelandiae</i>	m	<i>Ourisia macrophylla</i>	
<i>Epilobium nerterioides</i>	o	var. <i>robusta</i>	p
<i>Luzula picta</i> var. <i>pallida</i>	p	<i>Blechnum penna-marina</i>	p
<i>Blechnum</i> sp. ( <i>B. capense</i> agg. common species)	p	<i>Miehlenbeckia complexa</i>	m
<i>Polystichum vestitum</i>	p	<i>Coprosma</i> sp. (un-named - included in <i>C. parviflora</i> by Oliver)	p
<i>Nertera ciliata</i>	m	<i>Cordyline indivisa</i>	p
<i>Gunnera monoica</i>	o	<i>Coprosma tenuifolia</i>	m
<i>Carex</i> sp. (c.f. <i>C. germinata</i> )	m	<i>Griselinia littoralis</i>	p
<i>Juncus gregiflorus</i>	o	<i>Dicksonia squarrosa</i>	o
<i>Gaultheria antipoda</i>	p	<i>Thelymitra hatchii</i> (?)	m
<i>Helichrysum</i> sp. (un-named aff. <i>H. bellidioides</i> )	p		
<i>Cyathodes fasciculata</i>	p		
<i>Histiopteris incisa</i>	p		
<i>Meliccytus ramiflorus</i> var. <i>ramiflorus</i>	o		

3200 feet: grassland slopes, logs, stumps etc.

<i>Myrsine divaricata</i>	p	<i>Dicksonia fibrosa</i>	o
<i>Helichrysum aggregatum</i>	o	<i>Chionochoa conspicua</i>	
<i>Olearia colensoi</i> var. <i>colensoi</i>	p	var. <i>cunninghamii</i>	p
<i>Podocarpus totara</i> (1 foot high adult - chewed)	r	<i>Nothofagus menziesii</i>	o
<i>Coprosma foetidissima</i>	o	<i>Lycopodium volubile</i>	r
<i>Dracophyllum adamsii</i>	p	<i>Brachyglottis repanda</i> var. <i>repanda</i>	o
<i>D. pyramidale</i>	r	<i>Pseudopanax colensoi</i>	m
<i>Weinmannia racemosa</i>	m	<i>Todea superba</i>	o
<i>Lycopodium laterale</i>	p	<i>Metrosideros diffusa</i>	r
<i>Archeria racemosa</i>	o	<i>Meliccytus lanceolatus</i>	m
<i>Blechnum procerum</i>	m		
<i>Fuchsia excoartata</i>	p		
<i>Hebe stricta</i> var. <i>stricta</i>	p		
<i>Ranunculus hirtus</i>	m		
<i>Pseudowintera colorata</i>	p		

LIPOCA IN MOUNTAIN OTAGO

3400 feet: end of grass - steep, rocky slopes start.

- Euphrasia cuneata p
- Iuzuriaga parviflora o
- Aristotelia serrata o
- Pseudopanax laetus o
- Carpodetus serratus o
- Pseudopanax arboreus r
- Poa anceps var. p
- Lycopodium fastigiatum p
- Olearia arborescens m

3700 feet

- Celmisia spectabilis var. spectabilis p
- Gaultheria sp. (un-named; incl. in G. depressa as var. novae-zelandiae) p
- Senecio elaeagnifolius var. elaeagnifolius m
- Epilobium alsinoides s.s. o
- Asplenium sp. (A. flaccidum agg. - common forest sp.) on rocks r

3800 feet

- Viola filicaulis m
- Senecio rufiglandulosus var. rufiglandulosus p
- Notodanthonia clavata m
- Poa colensoi p
- Lycopodium scariosum p
- Gaultheria paniculata p
- G. paniculata X G. sp. un-named p

4400 feet

- Coriaria arborea var. arborea r
- Parahebe olsenii p
- Hymenophyllum multifidum o

4450 feet

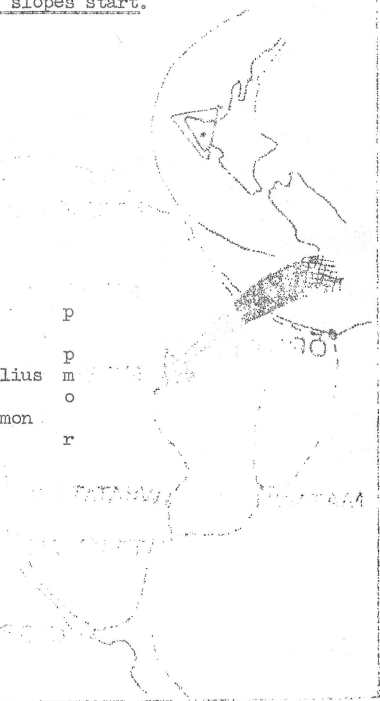
- Astelia fragrans

4500 feet

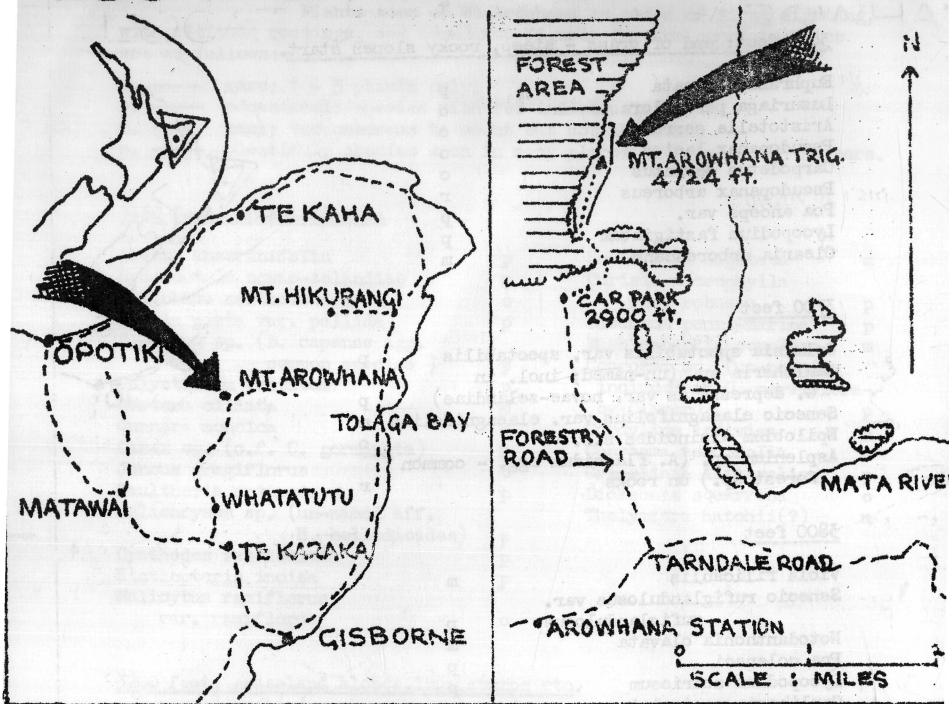
- Coprosma pseudocuneata m
- Hebe stricta var. lata p
- Chionochloa pallens var. p

4700 - 4724 feet: mountain plateau

- Oreobolus pectinatus p
- Gahnia procera p
- Dacrydium bidwillii m



# LOCATION MAP : MT. AROWHANA



## CORRECTIONS RE CHATHAM ISLAND HEBES

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In the July 1975 Newsletter I made reference to two species of *Hebe* growing on Chatham Island which I now realize are incorrect.

*Hebe barkeri* - Where I described this species growing in coastal conditions at Waitangi, Kaiangaroa and Awenga is incorrect and the appropriate species is *H. Cheffenschii*. This latter species was also seen at Te Whanga Lagoon and also just north of it. *Hebe barkeri* appears to grow only in the southern forest area of the island where it can reach tree-like proportions. The older name for it was *H. gigantea*.

*Hebe elliptica* var. - I mentioned a purple-flowered form growing at Kaiangaroa under this name. Here again the plant in question is a cultivar - probably *H. elliptica* x *H. speciosa* - and not *H. elliptica*, of which little is known regarding its Chatham Island habitats.