OUTGROWTHS OF KAURI, AGATHIS AUSTRALIS SALISB., ARAUCARIACEAE, IN THE AUCKLAND INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM, NEW ZEALAND

R. C. Cooper
Auckland Institute and Museum

Abstract. "Lacewood" and "knobby wooden curios" produced by the New Zealand kauri tree, *Agathis australis* Salisb., are described. Correspondents advise that "lacewood" is formed following damage to the trunk and resembles a flattened branch enclosed within the bark. "Curios" are aerial roots cleaned of their bark.

In the Cheeseman Herbarium of the Auckland Institute and Museum there are four kauri outgrowths, catalogued:

1. Piece of lacewood, 46 x 24 x 2 cm, presented by Mr. A. E. Brookes, 1st June 1950. Fig. 1.
2. Knobby wooden curio, 60 x 18 x 14 cm, possibly from the Whitford district, presented by Mr. R. C. H. Hensen, October 1965. Fig. 2.
3. Knobby wooden curio, 52 x 17 x 12 cm, possibly from the Whitford district, presented by Mr. R. C. H. Hensen, October 1965.
4. Knobby wooden curio, 48 x 28 x 24 cm, possibly from the Kumeu district, presented by Mr. A. Cates, 21st March 1966. Fig. 3.

The only illustrations of outgrowths of kauri trees seem to be two paintings by C. Blomfield, one dated 1920, the other undated, presented to the Museum by Mrs. E. S. Blomfield in June 1943. One is shown in Fig. 4.

As there is little information regarding these growths in the literature on the kauri, *The New Zealand Herald* newspaper kindly published photographs of two of them. Readers were asked for information, and the following notes have been made from the replies received.

Kauri Lacewood

Mr. C. Hutly of Awanui wrote that lacework patterns were found under the bark of kauri trees that had fractured.

Mr. R. Fitzwilliam of Glenfield wrote that when milling kauri trees damaged by fire at Redvale near Albany, he obtained a piece of lacewood 10 to 12 feet long. He found it between two layers of bark inside a bulge on the trunk. It grew upward like a branch, but had not broken through

Rec. Auck. Inst. Mus. 6 (4-6): 407-412 March 14th 1969.



FIG. 1—Piece of kauri lacewood, 46 x 24 cm, presented by Mr. A. E. Brookes.

the outer layer. Lacewood was not uncommon in trees that had been damaged by fire.

Miss K. Spragg of Auckland advised that, in the 1920s, near their property in the Waitakere Ranges, her father cut a specimen of lacewood from a kauri tree that had been damaged by fire.

KNOBBY WOODEN CURIOS

Mr. C. Hutly of Awanui wrote that he had been told that these growths

were found in the heads of kauri trees. Possibly they developed where young shoots had been damaged by frost, wind, or insects.

Mr. T. C. Millar of Rawene wrote that most Hokianga homes had specimens 70 years ago. The growths were found on the trunks of kauri trees. When the trees were milled, the growths were cut off, and the bushmen took them back to camp and cleaned off the bark. It was an interesting hobby cutting away the bark to expose the wooden knobs.



FIG. 2—Outgrowth of kauri, 60 cm high, presented by Mr. R. C. H. Hensen.

Mr. R. Winger advised that he had eight specimens in his Sawmill Museum at Kaikohe. They were not found on the trunk or branches of kauri, but grew only from the roots. All his specimens were obtained from the roots of trees that grew in swampy ground and had fallen or blown over.

Mr. J. P. Church of Whangarei wrote that the growths were known to bushmen as "curios", and were aerial roots. About six miles from the



FIG. 3—Outgrowth of kauri, 48 cm high, presented by Mr. A. Cates.



FIG. 4—Painting of a kauri tree, by Mr. C. Blomfield.

south end of the Waipoua Forest there was a kauri tree alongside the road with several growths near the ground. Farther on, near the Tarahoka clearing, there was a kauri on the west side of the road which had enough growths on it to fill a dray. Mr. Church was in charge of road building there in 1927-28. Bushmen boiled or steamed the growths so that the bark would peel easily. Being of the sappiest of sap wood, they were prone to borer.

Mr. F. S. Holman of Whangarei advised that the growths were caused by dense masses of plants growing against the trunk of the kauri. Sometimes they developed inside hollow trees. At one time the little knobs were sought by cabinetmakers for veneers; when cut open the grain of the knob resembled the tightly packed petals of a rosebud.

Mr. E. Edge of Auckland presented a photograph of a large specimen collected at Kaimarama, near Whitianga, in 1913. He found it on a kauri tree where a rata vine (*Metrosideros sp.*) had injured the trunk. The growth had formed above the vine, and grew down about three feet. It was four feet in width, covered in bark, and weighed more than 1 cwt. Removal of the bark with a knife took a long time.

Mr. A. F. Hicks of Auckland wrote that the growths were known as "kauri tree flowers". The bark peeled off quite easily when they were green. Several correspondents advised that there are specimens in the Whangarei City Council Museum and the Waipu Pioneers' Memorial Museum. Finally, Mr. F. Whittaker of Oratia showed the writer a growth on a young kauri tree. It appeared to be composed of roots. It had formed on the trunk, about 1 metre from the ground, some 30 years ago, where a side shoot branched off.

I am indebted to *The New Zealand Herald* newspaper for publishing photographs of the growths; to many correspondents for interesting replies; and to Mr. Ian McLaren for photographs.



Cooper, R C. 1969. "OUTGROWTHS OF KAURI, AGATHIS AUSTRALIS SALISB., ARAUCARIACEAE, IN THE AUCKLAND INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM, NEW ZEALAND." *Records of the Auckland Institute and Museum* 6, 407–412.

View This Item Online: https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/291583
Permalink: https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/357347

Holding Institution
Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira

Sponsored by
C & L Gregory Trust

Copyright & Reuse
Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.
Rights Holder: Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira
License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
Rights: http://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org.

This file was generated 31 March 2024 at 04:28 UTC