remains. It is a resource beyond price, and Australia's forest remnants are indeed "dinosaur forests" as described by David Bellamy, each an entity that has evolved through 60 million years ... and surely deserving of total protection.

"Tribes' claims create poser" - *Pomaderris apetala* at Musick Point, Auckland

R.O. Gardner

The photograph on p. 29 of a comprehensively-illustrated history of the Howick and Pakuranga districts (La Roche 1991) caught my attention. Rangitoto is in the background, and in the foreground are some bushy plants, not immediately identifiable partly through there being no person or object to give a scale.
The caption states:

> Tainui (Pomaderris apertula [sic]). This shrub or small tree is found naturally only on Musick Point and from Kawhia Harbour to the Mokau River. It is said that stakes of Tainui were used as floor boards in the Tainui canoe when it came from Hawaiiki. While the canoe was at Musick Point some stakes took root and hence this isolated grove today. This is further scientific botanical evidence supporting the well-documneted oral traditional history of the Tainui canoe.

After examining the location map on p. 282 of the book I had thought that these plants might be growing on the cliff edge on the western side of the point, perhaps in native coastal vegetation. But the field-work proved arduous only in prospect; one drives almost to the end of the peninsula, passes across the enormous defensive ditch of the pa site to the former radio station building now owned by Telecom, and there on the last 50 metres or so of the headland, on the very irregularly hollowed and terraced ground, are numerous quite large trees of Pomaderris apetala.

These trees are those shown in the photograph and immediately one notices how this plant can form "groves" by sending up strong new trunks from fallen-down ones. Leaving aside the question of the ultimate ("Hawaiiki") origin of P. apetala (except to say that the Tainui is supposed to have visited the the Hauraki Gulf before going on to Mokau), it cannot be denied that this plant might very well have the ability to resurrect itself from canoe-flooring stakes, and an experiment along these lines would be very interesting. The plant is recorded in Flora N.Z. IV as having naturalized at various places around the country. Presumably this is by seeding, but its ability to clone may also have influenced "naturalized" status.

There are strong reasons to be disinclined to accept that P. apetala here is of ancient Maori origin. The first and to my mind insuperable objection is that neither Kirk nor Cheeseman knew of these plants. The second is that the plants are not found in the scrub of the coastal cliff and its edges, not even at the west end of the defensive ditch -- this damp-bottomed scrubby area, which has some manuka, Pseudopanax lessonii, Pittosporum crassifolium and old hawthorn, might be expected to harbour relictual vegetation. P. apetala occurs in half a dozen or so groves (i.e. pure stands), and the largest individuals are all about the same size, c. 8 m tall, 40 cm basal diameter. Seemingly, they are

just a short way into their overmature stage, having amongst them a few blown-over or basally rotted individuals. Seedlings are lacking. There are no obviously ancient groupings, and without knowing anything of the supposed history of the site one would have no reason to think that these trees are anything other than part of the plantings associated with the radio building (c. 50 years old) or perhaps with some slightly earlier phase of the area as a park. (Examination of a 20 cm diameter stem cut during recent maintenance here yielded an age of c. 40-50 years).

An article about Musick Point in the New Zealand Herald (March 13 1992) indicates that the tainui problem is not just an academic one. Under the heading as above, it has a Dept. of Survey and Land Information person saying that "it is proving difficult to communicate with the various tribes and to figure out who is the true tangata whenua". Perhaps in the near future these plants will be the object of more disinterested scrutiny.

REFERENCE

La Roche, A. 1990. "The History of Howick and Pakuranga". The Howick and Districts Historical Society (Inc.).

Field trip - Upper Nihotupu Track 15 August 1992

Sandra Jones

Following a week of constant thunderstorms and hail, somebody put in a good word for us - only one short, gentle shower was sent, just to remind us of our good fortune. Twenty Bot Soc members were experienced enough field trippers to know that it would be all right on the day. The rain and hail showers resumed again that night.

The Upper Nihotupu Track passes through watershed reserve and links the Nihotupu Auxiliary Reservoir, north of the Piha (West Coast) Road below Waiatarua, with the Cutty Grass Track. A permit is required to enter the Watershed area. The Reservoir is dry, decommissioned 5 or 6 years ago. According to an informant in the ARC, there was "no longer any use for it", which didn't seem to us to be a very satisfactory explanation, especially in view of the fact that a new Auckland water supply reservoir is being built at Riverhead in the next few years. But one of our own members reported that the reason for the decommissioning of the dam was that it had silted up so badly that the water was only 1 m deep in places. On the visual evidence we were more inclined to accept the latter version.

The track crosses a plateau and passes through healthy regenerating bush. It looks as though the area has been extensively milled and burnt in the past. As you might expect from a high altitude plateau such as this there is restricted run-off, and following the sort of heavy rain we'd had, we paddled most of the way. But it wasn't unpleasant. We even managed to cross the 1.5 m wide, 1 m deep ditch-like stream without having to fish anybody out.

The main features of the area are:

(1) the Gahnia xanthocarpa swamp, with Syzygium (Eugenia) maire (swamp maire or maire tawake), the swamp astelia Astelia grandis (one of four