



**FERN SOCIETY
OF VICTORIA**

NEWSLETTER

DATE MAR. '81
VOLUME 3
NUMBER 2

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AN APOLOGY TO MEMBERS OF THE FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

This spot in the Newsletter is, of course, reserved for a message from the President of the Society, Mr. Chris Goudey.

The fact that this does not appear in this issue is due entirely to the carelessness of Ivanhoe Typing and Duplicating Service.

Unfortunately, the only existing copy of the President's Message became separated from the rest of the copy for the Newsletter, never to be seen again.

That this has never happened before (and, I pray, will never happen again!) is not an acceptable excuse, so I would like to apologise to all members, and in particular to Mr. Goudey, for the inconvenience caused.

J. BIELICKI
Manager

ITEMS TO KEEP IN MIND:

The fern chosen for the March competition is the fine maiden hair.

Our first Fern Show, to be held at the Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, on March 21st and 22nd. Tell all your friends, and bring them along.

New Zealand Fern Tour - details of costs, etc., from Chris Goudey.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Members who went to the Wangaratta area on Sunday, 22nd February, had a most enjoyable day, in spite of the very hot weather. They arrived back in Melbourne at about 7.30 p.m., carrying the usual 'goodies' which they had purchased at the various Nurseries visited.

Our next field trip is to the Tarra Valley and Bulga National Park, on Saturday, 11th April. This should be another day full of interest to fern lovers. Tarra Valley was mentioned in the August, 1980, issue of the Fern Society Newsletter. Anyone wishing to go on the bus is asked to ring me on 755 1222, or put your names down on the list at the March meeting, at the latest.

Before this outing, however, we have our very first Show - on Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd March, at the Herbarium, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra (part of the Royal Botanic Gardens). We do want to make our display as attractive as possible, so please bring along your ferns - one or two - ten or twenty - all will be gratefully received. This is a marvellous opportunity to foster greater interest in ferns, to show the general public just how beautiful ferns are, and also to spark interest in membership of our Society.

Country and interstate members who are coming to Melbourne for Garden Week are invited to come and introduce themselves to us.

The Herbarium will be open from 2.30 p.m. onwards on Friday, 20th March. It would be very much appreciated if you could telephone me some time before the day to let us know approximately how many ferns you will be able to bring for display. We would also appreciate any offers of help on the Friday, Saturday or Sunday, even for an hour or so.

A reminder for new members, and others who may be interested - we have our metal badges for sale at \$1.50. They are a talking point at shows, etc., and help advertise the Society.

We are compiling a list of members, including interstate and overseas subscribers. These will be available to members on application, for approximately 50 cents each.

IRENE BOLSTER
Secretary



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DOUG THOMAS KEEPS LARGE AUDIENCE RAPT AT FEBRUARY MEETING

A 45 million year journey in time took little more than 45 minutes to present at the February meeting.

Fern Society member, Doug Thomas, kept the audience enthralled with his presentation of "Ferns and Other Interesting Features of Outback Queensland".

Doug's talk, which climaxed with outstanding slides of the massive *Angiopteris evecta*, the biggest ground or terrestrial fern in the world, demonstrated how knowledgeable he is on Australian ferns & allies - not to mention presenting some of the best photography seen at monthly meetings since the Society commenced.

Originally set down to give a short talk on the Carnarvon Gorge in outback Queensland, Doug expanded this to take in other interesting locations of rain forests, native flora and fauna and elements of natural history on the way there.

Carnarvon Gorge is due west of Gladstone, Queensland. It is about 450 miles inland and the final stages of the trip are over very poor roads. "They are passable, but need extreme care in places" Doug told members.

But before we record the beauty of *Angiopteris Evecta*, we were treated to photographic highlights along the way. Doug observed that most people travel up the coast in search of ferns and often forget that there are other places - often arid places - which have abundant ferns.

First stopping-off point was the Wawrumbungle Ranges, near the New England district. It is by no means a rain forest but the area has many fern types. Some of the ferns Doug showed the meeting were *Cheilanthes distans*, a small bristly cloak fern, and a little fellow not more than an inch high - *Anogramma leptophylla*, which is found in moist crevices and under rocks. Common maiden hair, *Adiantum aethiopicum*, mountain violets and necklace ferns were also prevalent in the region.

About 70 miles north of the Wawrumbungles is a volcanic crater called Yulladane, which has some unusual volcanic plugs caused by erosion of the socket materials of the plug. This area forms part of the Mount Kaputar National Park. An outstanding feature of the area is the grass trees, *Xanthorrhoea*. Another unusual fern found there is the "blanket fern", *Pleurosorus rutifolius*, which also grows in crevices and under rocks. It is called blanket fern because it has very hairy cover on the fronds. Rasp ferns, prickly rasp fern (*Doodia aspera*) in spring growth with beautiful pink to red colouring and *Pityrogramma chrysophylla* (gold back fern), all added to the charm of the district.

Then it was off to Dorrigo and into the jungle of the rain forest. Dorrigo is 40 miles west of Coffs Harbour in some of New South Wales' most inhospitable country. "Bird's-nest fern abounds there as an epiphyte", Doug observed. "In Melbourne, we grow these quite well in our gardens in the soil as a terrestrial fern. In northern New South Wales they grow as epiphytes of massive proportions", he added.

.../Cont'd.

THE OCCURRENCE OF ASPLENium PELLUCIDUM Lam. IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

By Christopher J. Goudey

A widespread tropical fern, whose south-eastern limit was thought to be New Guinea, has recently been discovered in the rainforests of north-eastern Queensland.

Asplenium pellucidum Lam. is native to Madagascar, India, Indo-China, Malaysia and New Guinea, and has recently been discovered along the Palmerston Valley in the far north.

This fern is a lowland species, that usually grows on the mossy branches of trees, and also on rocks in continuously moist situations.

A. pellucidum is an erect fern with pinnate, lanceolate fronds normally up to 100 cm. long; however, Australian material is much smaller. It has a short-creeping rhizome, densely clothed with dark brown to black scales. The sori on the fronds are recessed into small cups, that appear as pimples on the upper surface of the frond. This species occasionally proliferates at the tip of the frond to form a new plant, much the same as *Asplenium attenuatum* R. Br.

I first discovered this fern in August of 1976, growing in the company of several other less common *Asplenium* species of the north. *A. affine* Sw., *A. unilaterale* Lam. var. *australiense* (F.M. Bail.) Domin, and *A. baileyana* (Domin) Watts. These ferns, together with many others were growing in a steep valley, where they would normally receive plenty of moisture from the ever present mist rising from the large waterfalls in that area.

A visit to the same site, a year later, revealed that many of the plants had withered and died, because of an extremely dry Winter. Several plants were noted to be still alive, and I have no doubt that this species will not vanish.

Pressed specimens were sent to the Brisbane Herbarium for identification.

FERN SHOW ... 21ST AND 22ND MARCH ... AT THE HERBARIUM

FROM THE EDITOR

Now that we are to have our first fern show, our President will need a great deal of help, so let us all get behind him, and make this the Fern Show that people will talk about for years.

Remember - your help on the 21st and 22nd, however small, could mean the difference between a fabulous success or a failure.

FERN SHOW ... ADMISSION 50¢ ADULTS, 25¢ CHILDREN ...

MORE FERNS FOR PROTECTED PLACES

Once more, we would like to thank Mr. David L. Jones for permission to re-print portion of his article.

MISTIOPTERIS INCISA "Batswing Fern" (all states except W.A.): A tall, graceful fern that likes cool, moist positions. The fronds are an unusual shape, and an attractive bluish-green. The species has a creeping rhizome and the fronds grow to about 1.5 m. tall.

LASTREOPSIS MICROSORA "Creeping Shield-Fern" (Qld., Vic., N.S.W.): A beautiful fern with a creeping habit that forms a dense mass of lacy fronds to about 46 cms. tall. The new fronds are a light green and contrast with the dark green of the older fronds. It does well in shady situations and is very useful in a rockery. It can be quite vigorous and should be cut back by severing the rhizome. New plants can be started from these sections.

LYGODIUM SCANDENS "Climbing Fern" (Qld., N.S.W.): An unusual species because of its climbing or scrambling habit. The stems twine around trunks or nearby plants and old specimens may be up to 1.5 m. tall. They become quite bushy with age and add a very distinctive appearance to the fern garden. The leaflets have an unusual wavy margin. There are about four species of climbing ferns in Australia, but *L. scandens* is the commonest and best in cultivation. It is quite frost hardy, at least, as far south as Melbourne.

POLYSTICHUM FORMOSUM "Broad Shield-Fern" (Qld., N.S.W., Vic.): This species has a broad, very attractive lacy frond that arches in a similar manner to *P. australiense*. The colour is light green, however, and the stem is covered with a large number of conspicuous papery scales. Young plants are not produced on the fronds which grow to about 60 cm. tall. It will take some exposure to sun, but does best in a shady position.



● Creeping Shield-Fern is a useful plant in a shady rockery.



● *Pteris umbrosa*, one of the best for a cool, moist position, grows among other ferns.

PTERIS UMBROSA "Jungle Brake" (Qld., N.S.W., Vic)

One of the best ferns for a cool, moist position. It forms a dense clump to about a metre high. The new fronds are shiny and light green in contrast to the darker old foliage.

The leaflets are borne in a bunch at the top of a long slender stem and have a finger-like appearance.

PTERIS VITTATA "Chinese Brake" (Qld., N.S.W., Vic, W.A.): A creeping species with tall, fishbone-type fronds that are a dull green.

It is very slow growing and does well in limey soils.

REPORT ON DOUG THOMAS' TALK (Cont'd.)

One Birds'-nest shown had established itself on the broken top of a sapling. Other ferns shown were the lovely *Anthropteris tenella* (which Doug observed was once called a *Polypodium*), creeper epiphyte growing along the vines, sporling ferns on the rock face and *Adiantum formosum* - black stem maiden hair - all added to the beauty, serenity and coolness of the Dorrigo rain forest areas.

The pictorial visit to Dorrigo was all too brief and we next moved into the McPherson Ranges which is approached from Kyogle in the far north of New South Wales. The main area is Wyanjerie National Park. Creek scenes of *Cyathea cooperi* growing naturally with *Dicksonia youngiae* in this particular area filled the screen - in fact, Doug had to select a small one to get into the camera frame.

Another *Arthropteris*, *Arthropteris beckleri*, was photographed climbing up a tree trunk; they grow quite big. And to add a spice of variety, Doug had captured on camera a strangler fig at work. Roots clinging to a tree trunk will grow and gradually strangle the tree. The tree ultimately to meet its doom is actually the host tree. Seeds of the fig were probably transported by birds and deposited as droppings high in the tree. Slender roots then wind down to the soil and so the fig starts off. Eerie but spectacular.

Just to show us that ferns will grow in the most unlikely places, we made a short pictorial visit to the Girraween National Park. Noted mainly for its abundant wild flowers, there are also a few fern types found amongst the granites, which dominate the area. These include *Psilotum nudum* or skeleton fork fern. According to botanists, it is one of the oldest plants known. Its early genesis is related to seaweed. It has yellow heads which are spore heads. The amazing thing is how they grow in very harsh conditions. The little cone fern, *Schizaea*, was growing there too.

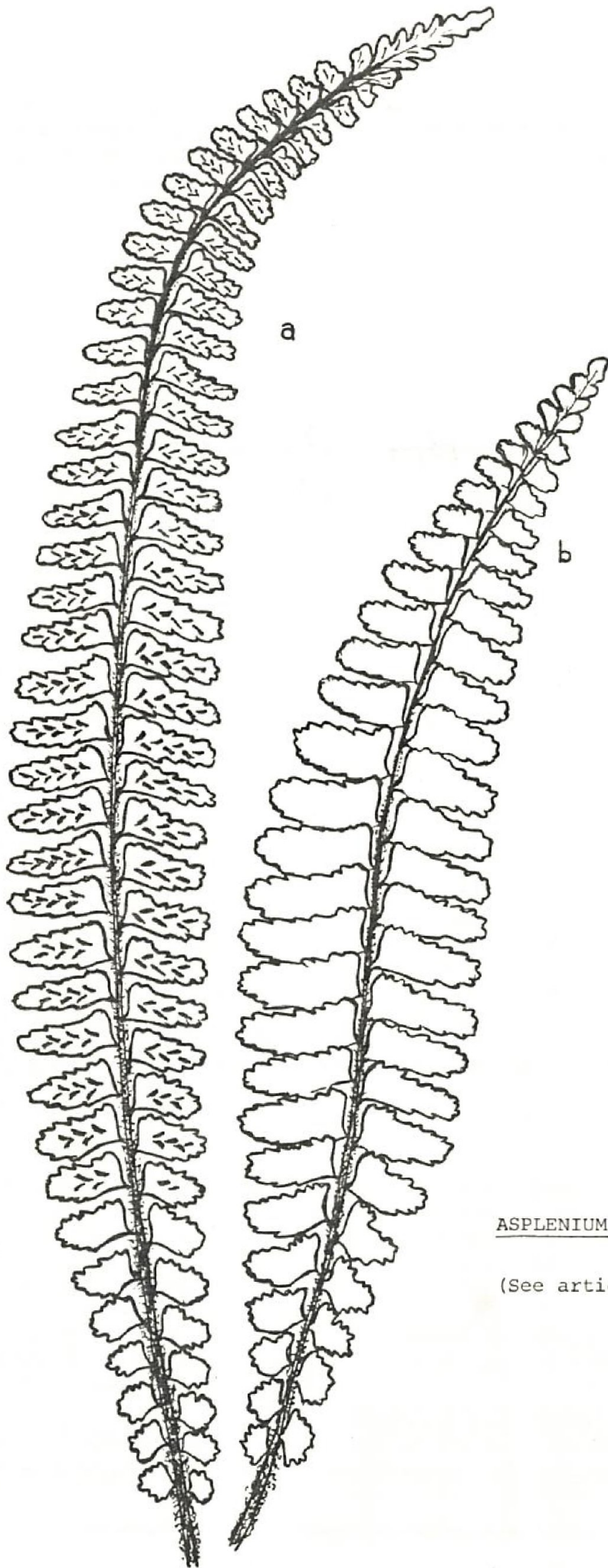
Now we are moving along the dry open plains and heading north to the ultimate quest of Doug's 1978 trip - the Carnarvon Gorge. Tales of how Gray from the Burke and Wills expedition survived on Marsilea, commonly called four leaf clover brought the audience back to the harsh realities of the region - and the trip.

Carnarvon Gorge. Outback Queensland. An unlikely location for some of the most spectacular flora and fauna found in Australia.

Carnarvon Gorge. *Angiopteris evecta*. The biggest ground or terrestrial fern in the world.

In its history, fossilised specimens have been found in coal deposits in all the major continents - specimens which date back in some cases an estimated 45 million years, this fern has not altered very much; has never had to adapt or change its way until of course civilisation's indiscretions have caused it to become extinct in many areas. At Carnarvon Gorge, though, it still survives. It survives in a tiny river in the *Agiopteris* Ravine. Excitingly, there is plenty of evidence in the Ravine of sporlings growing. Doug said that the fern is very difficult to grow from spore. An alternative method used to grow the fern is to sow the tiny oracles in peat moss and it is possible then to reproduce the fern naturally.

For the next five minutes we drank in the beauty of *Angiopteris evecta* and the wonder of nature - how such a harsh part of Australia could be host to one of the botanical wonders of the world.



ASPENIUM PELLUCIDUM Lam.

(See article on following page)

STICHERUS TENER "Silky Fan-Fern: (N.S.W., Vic., Tas.): A very beautiful fern with unusual umbrella-like fronds that grow densely together in a clump.

The plants spread slowly by a creeping underground rhizome and the fronds branch and grow upward to form an entangled clump.

The foliage is lobed and a light bluish-green.

STICHERUS FLABELLATUS is similar, but with more pointed leaflets.

Both like a cool, moist position and resent drying out.

NEPHROLEPIS EXALTATA

"Queensland Fishbone":

A large, coarse fern that exists in a bewildering variety of forms. These have been selected and propagated by nurserymen and given names if they are stable forms. The species is a tall, coarse form that reproduces vigorously by suckering and quickly develops into a large clump. It is widely grown in N.S.W. and Queensland, but, unfortunately, is killed off by frosts farther south. Many of the forms can be grown in the garden or as house plants and, indeed, some are hardier than the ordinary plant.

PALLAEA VIRIDIS (Exotic): A very attractive fern with unusual, upright fronds of a very pleasant green. The species grows into a neat, rounded clump with the fronds reaching to about 46 cm. high. It is an ideal form for a shaded rockery because of its habit, the green contrasting with the rocks.

POLYSTICHUM ANGULARE or SETIFERUM "European Shield-Fern" (Exotic): A beautiful species which grows into a low, dense, rounded tussock. The individual fronds are narrow, compact and lacy. They are upright when young, but eventually become nearly horizontal. The stems are covered with loose, brown scales and bear young plants as bulbils along the lower half. It is hardy in the ground, but needs a cool, shady position and intensely dislikes drying winds.

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Silky Fan-Fern has light bluish-green lobed fronds.

One of my more unusual, but extremely successful, spots for growing ferns is a pair of brick window boxes, each 25 cm. x 160 cm., set into the ground under the front windows of our house.

The house faces east, so the window boxes receive full morning sun but are protected from the hot midday and afternoon sun (and also from the west winds) by the eaves of the house. The eaves also keep out the rain, so they don't become water-logged in winter and, in fact, require watering lightly weekly or fortnightly. In summer, of course, almost daily watering for five minutes is necessary.

The window boxes were filled with 15 - 20 cm. of very old leaf mould and compost on top of the natural soil and the surface almost completely covered with rocks (or logs), and the following ferns wedged in between the rocks.

Adiantum capillus-veneris, *hispidulum*
Asplenium flabellifolium, *trichomanes*
Cheilanthes distans, *sieberi*, *tenuifolia*
Cystopteris filix-fragilis
Davallia pyxidata
Drynaria rigidula
Pellaea falcata, *falcata nana*, *paradoxa*
Pleurosorus rutifolius
Pteris vittata
Pyrrosia confluens rupestris

Most of these are thriving, doing far better in this position than in more standard fern surroundings. Undoubtedly, there are other ferns which would behave similarly. *Cyathea australis*, *Dicksonia antarctica*, *Nephrolepis cordifolia*, *Polystichum proliferum* and *Pteris tremula* have all sprung up from spore in the window boxes, so presumably would grow well there.

Intermingled with the ferns, I have also wedged the following orchids into the gaps between the rocks - *Dendrodium aemulum*, *delicatum*, *falcorostrum*, *gracilicaule*, *kingianum*, *linguiforme*, *monophyllum*, *ruppianum*, *speciosum*, and *Liparis reflexa*. All of these have shown rapid growth, and all but two have flowered.

The main difficulty experienced so far has been overcrowding due to the rapid growth of both ferns and orchids. Hopefully, this won't be a deterrent to those of you with a spare, east-facing wall, and an interest in trying a less conventional fernery.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Do you have any interesting or unusual fern-growing experiences to relate? If so, please drop us a line - no need to wait until you have special notepaper and time to compose a literary masterpiece, as our typist has promised she won't faint at the sight of hastily scrawled notes on less-than-elegant notepaper!

Those members who may be planning a trip north during the colder months will find the following article most interesting, as it could add an extra dimension to their trip. Even those who are staying home will enjoy the information it contains.

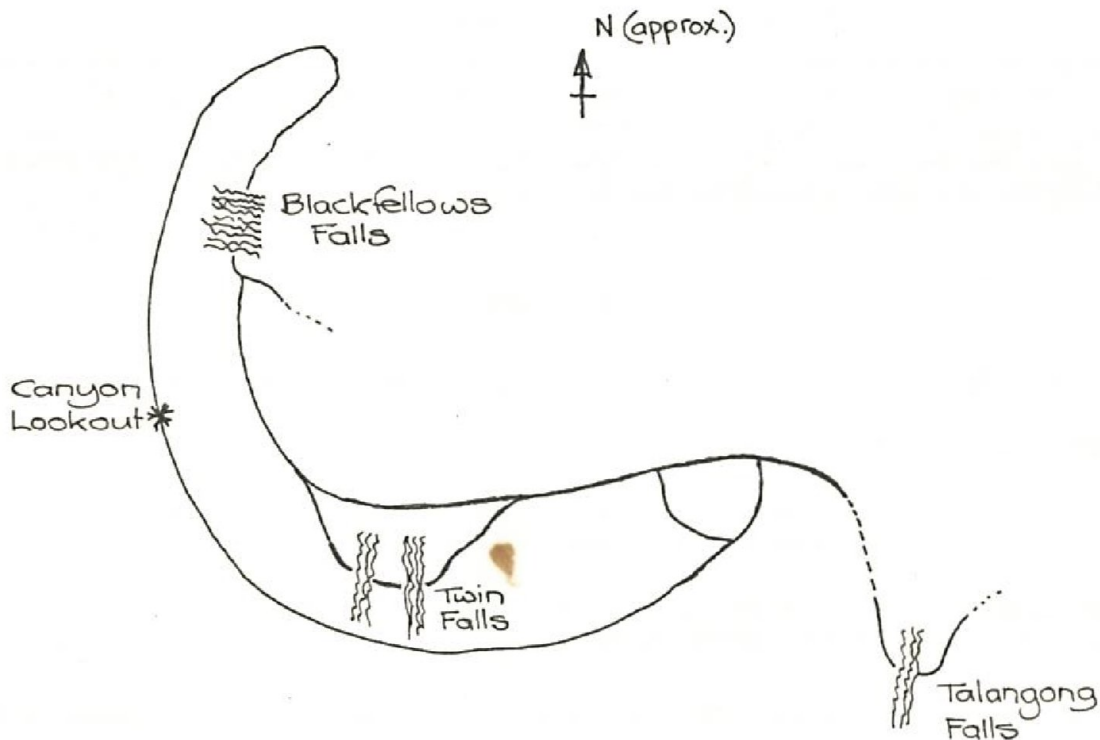
WARRIE NATIONAL PARK - S.E. QUEENSLAND

by Rod Hill

Warrie National Park at Springbrook is about 40 km. inland from the Gold Coast. The easy, half-day walk described below combines spectacular scenery and lush rainforest, and passes behind three sets of waterfalls. Many interesting ferns may be observed, including some very beautiful Bristly Treeferns (*Dicksonia youngiae*) along the lower sections of the track.

The walk may be commenced at the Canyon Lookout carpark. Follow the track to the right from the lookout, keeping as closely as possible to the cliff-top. As the track descends into the valley, keep right at a junction part way down and again at the bottom of the cliffs, continuing on to Talangong Falls - the track is open this far.

Return to the lower track-junction, and continue along the lower track here and at the next junction also. From here, keep to the left at all further junctions, passing behind Twin Falls and Blackfellows Falls (the latter may "dampen" your enthusiasm!) and continue on to Canyon Lookout.



The following species are available, additional to those on the December, 1980 Spore List.

Adiantum aethiopicum (1.81)
 " capillus-veneris (1.81)
 Asplenium bulbiferum (native form) (12.80)
 Cheilanthes sp. (S.E. Qld) (1.81)
 Doodia media (12.80)
 Doryopteris pedata (11.80)
 Hypolepis australia (1.81)
 Polystichum andersonii (?)
 Pteris umbrosa (12.80)
 " vittata (1.81)
 Rumohra adiantiformis (exotic form) (1.81)
 " " (native form) (1.81)
 Sticherus tener (1.81)
 Syngamma alismifolia (12.80)
 Trismeria trifoliata (2.80)

Please note:

- * Campyloneuron phyllitidis, Leptopteris fraseri and Polystichum braunii from the December list are no longer available by mail.
- * Spore listed as "Angiopteris palmiformis" was collected in the Philippines, but is not Angiopteris. It seems almost certainly to be a species of Cyathea.
- * The native & exotic forms of Rumohra adiantiformis are quite different ferns. The native fern has a thin rhizome (up to 1 cm.), leathery fronds commonly about 40 - 50 cms. with rounded pinnules, and grows as an epiphyte. The exotic fern is commonly cultivated in the U.S.A. and has a much thicker rhizome (to about 3 cm.), larger and more upright fronds, often over 60 cm., with pointed pinnules and terrestrial habit (in cultivation, at least).

Spore samples may be purchased at monthly meetings, or by sending a list of your requirements, with a stamped, self-addressed envelope, plus a 20¢ stamp for each species requested, to Mr. R. Hill, 41 Kareela Road, Frankston, Victoria, 3199. Printed notes on the collection and propagation of spore are also available for 5¢.

-- DIARY DATES --

MARCH 12TH: Our speaker will be Harold Olney, speaking on Adiantums.
 MARCH 21ST & 22ND: First Fern Society Display, at The Herbarium.
 APRIL 9TH: Our speaker will be Rod Hill, speaking on the propagation of ferns from spores.
 MAY 14TH: Our speaker will be Kevin Heinze, speaking on ferns in the garden.

MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR NOW ... MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR NOW