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Locating the Vegetation of Early Coastal Otago: A Map and Its Sources

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Abstract

A distribution map of bush and swamp of coastal Otago during early European times is presented. The depository of one inch to one mile maps on to which the detailed vegetation boundaries have been plotted is recorded, and the basic sources are given.

THIS paper has the same aims as a previous one locating the vegetation of early Canterbury (Johnston, 1961). The first is to present a map showing the general distribution of bush and swamp of coastal Otago during early European times. The second is to indicate the depository of cadastral maps at a uniform scale of one inch to one mile on which the detailed boundaries of the vegetation shown in the generalised map have been plotted. The third purpose is to provide a record of the basic sources from which the one inch to one mile maps have been constructed. Because of the similarity of purpose, and to facilitate reference, both the style and format of the previous paper on Canterbury are more or less closely followed here.

Enquiries from both overseas and local research workers seem to indicate the need for an accurate distribution map of early vegetation, not only of coastal Otago and Canterbury, but throughout New Zealand. Such maps as attempt to show the distribution of "pre-European" vegetation for New Zealand as a whole are at a small scale, and give, therefore, only a general, and rather inaccurate for coastal Otago, idea of the distribution (Cumberland, 1941, 1961; McLintock, 1959). Moreover, it is apparent that they are based, at least as to distribution, primarily upon soil indicators, and inadequately upon early map sources. However, the files of the Dunedin office of the New Zealand Lands and Survey Department, like the files at Christchurch, contain a wealth of early manuscript maps, produced by the early surveyors who were engaged in laying out the sections, and who, at the same time, mapped the distribution of bush and swamp. Many of these maps are now over a hundred years old. Some are still being used in the normal course of the department's work. Consequently, although some of the originals have been redrawn, many are in a dilapidated state, and in danger of losing some of their detail. To that extent, the availability of an alternative source appears necessary.