

A large gathering of c 120 people from around the country filled the Hutton Theatre to celebrate the life and achievements of Geoff Baylis FRSNZ. The talks started with Geoff's family life in Auckland, and covered many facets of his life, from his distinguished Navy service to his contributions to the University of Otago, the Royal Society of New Zealand, the Otago Museum, the Hellaby Indigenous Grasslands Research Trust and even to the Botanical Society of Otago. Apparently Geoff enjoyed watching the tape of our BSO inaugural Geoff Baylis Lecture several times. Geoff's long association with the Department of Botany as Head and Professor was described in detail by colleagues and former students, who between them produced a vivid picture of changing times. A fascinating display of photographs further illustrated Geoff's life and times. Graeme Parmenter recorded all the talks on video, and Anthony Wright is summarising the scripts for publication in the New Zealand Botanical Society Newsletter. The day finished with a dedication ceremony in the University Courtyard, where some of Geoff's ashes were placed and a plaque laid under the magnificent *Magnolia campbellii*. A fitting place, as Geoff planted this magnificent tree in 1965. It has twice featured on the cover of the University Calendar and also graces the cover of the official University commemorative register. Thanks to the vision and tireless work of Alan and Pat Mark the whole day was a very special, historic and moving occasion.

Trip reports

Blue Mountains, 13 March –

Norman Mason

Trip Leader: Professor Emeritus Allan F. Mark

It was a brilliantly sunny autumn's day as an unprecedented number of botany buffs embarked for a trip to the top of the Blue Mountains. It seemed that the combination of the trip leader's eminence and the prospect of visiting a little-known corner of Otago was too much to resist. As well as BSO members from Dunedin, the party's numbers were swelled at the Beaumont rendezvous by guests from Invercargill and Alexandra. From there the convoy climbed the immaculately maintained forestry road that wound through pine and Douglas fir plantations on the lower slopes. Having the right key (a privilege not known to all visiting parties of naturalists) we were able to follow the road past the locked gate right to the highest point on the range (c. 1000 m).

Between the conifer plantations and the tree line, is silver beech forest, interspersed with pockets of the more pale-leaved *Hoheria*. In places the tree line is ragged, with younger trees establishing above the main massing of mature beech. This suggests that the treeline has been temporarily lowered by past disturbance (human or otherwise), since New Zealand beech forest typically forms very distinct boundaries at its upper limit. Prof. Mark also pointed out areas of stag-headed beech trees as evidence of damage due to heavy snowfalls.

The trip focussed on the complex of peatlands near the summit, which includes shrubland, tussock grassland and various bog communities. In the shrubland *Dracophyllum longifolium* dominates, with *Chionocloa rigida* (narrow-leaved snow tussock) an important component in places. As well as the dominant *C. rigida* the