

my wife, Bev. Over several years we got to know Harold and Brenda Hartill on their trips down under. Last October we were fortunate in being able to take up their offer to stay with them at their Spanish "bach", in the town of Gaucin. Days before our departure Rhys Gardner gave me a copy of his paper on *Macropiper* and it occurred to me that a gift of *Macropiper melchior* would delight Harold and it should enjoy the Spanish climate. So it was that among the first things I unpacked upon arrival at Casa de Los Patmeras, were Rhys's paper and the *Macropiper*. Harold immediately sat down to read the article and tossed me a book on "Wildflowers of Southern Spain" saying he thought the author may have some NZ connection and she in fact lived less than an hour away and it might be interesting to try and meet her.

As I read, recognising a few of the genera, if not the species, occurring in that part of the world, Harold asked, "Do you see the author of that book is Betty Motesworth Allen? Do you know what she was doing on the 6th of October 1945? This article refers to her collecting *Macropiper* specimens on Little Barrier Island." The then unmarried Betty Molesworth was at the time Curator at Auckland Museum. Amazed at the string of coincidences we resolved to phone Betty and a couple of days later arrived on her doorstep to a shy but warm welcome. Betty has made her home at Los Barrios in the very south of Spain, due north of Gibraltar, and has continued her passion for botany with frequent trips abroad, particularly to the jungles

of South America. Between times she studies the flora of Spain and has made such a contribution to local knowledge that she has recently had a local reserve named after her. We fortuitously drove past it on the way home and our quick glimpse was sufficient to see many palms featured. Her most recent publication is "Herbs and Spices – for the Mediterranean Kitchen".

In our talk with Betty we gleaned some of the fascinating details of her life in Malaysian forests, with her husband Jeffrie Allen. Betty made light of her adventures, not least being the tigers which glared when met face to face on a forest trail, and the heavily armed communist guerillas fighting the Malaysian troubles of the 50's. Betty's memories of her time at the Auckland Museum include the flood of native plants which had become the annual Cheeseman Memorial Flower Show and she expressed the hope that it might be revived in some (less environmentally damaging) form. As a formative event in my youth I have to affirm that the flower show with its sand posies of manuka flowers and fern, together with the book prizes, can eventually result in a fulltime commitment to native plants.

Perhaps we should sponsor an appropriate millenium project with competitions named after early botanists.

Note: Betty Allen was awarded the Linnean Society's H. H. Bloomer Award for Botany in 1995 (see ABS March 1997 News-sheet.)

***Pennantia baylisiana* Project**

Ross Beever & Geoff Davidson

Once considered the world's rarest plant, with only one female tree being found on the Three Kings Islands, in 1945.

Our Lucy Cranwell Research Fund was recently boosted by a \$5000 donation from the Oratia Native Plant Nursery Ltd. At our May meeting Geoff Davidson from the nursery presented the cheque which represented the sale of *Pennantia baylisiana* plants they had sold to raise funds for botanical and conservation groups. The plants were raised from a plant nicknamed Martha, which was one of the first seedlings raised from a cutting-grown plant at the Mt Albert Research Centre. Dr. Ross Beever of Landcare Research had noticed the occasional seed developing on the apparently female plant, but they never matured until he applied a plant hormone. Of the first six seedlings he grew only Martha proved to be sufficiently 'Arthur' to self-pollinate and produce quantities of viable seed. After DoC's request to provide a seed orchard, the first crops were grown on and planted at Geoff's property. They are now reaching their flowering stage and some appear to be bisexual, but a fully functional male has not yet been seen. Martha's 1997 crop was a bumper one and Geoff felt that he had enough plants to sell commercially; but he wanted to maximise both the rarity value of the plants and the amount they could raise for the recipient charities. He featured them at the Ellerslie Flower in November 1998, with assistance from the late Marie Taylor and her husband Lawre. Geoff says, "The price of \$100 was a bit off-putting for some but it did mean that the plants went only to homes where they would be really appreciated." Money raised from future sales will be given to the NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust which is establishing a network of reserves throughout the country. (See Appendix 1, p. 68)