

ON A MUCH VALUED MEMBER.Miss M. CROOKES.

We have known since the beginning of the year that Mr A.D. Mead would be leaving us, but he is such an unassuming man and his help is always so readily but so unobtrusively given, that I think that it is only now that he is gone that we realise how much we owe to him, for he was a singularly valuable member of our Society always giving most freely of both his knowledge and time.

Ever a lover of our plants and flowers, he has since his retirement as waterworks engineer, taken up the study of botany with characteristic thoroughness.

Always a keen and accurate observer, it was not long before he had a plant named in his honour, Ourisia macrophylla Hook. var. meadii L.B.Moore var. nov.

He was always quick to recognise any unusual form in an individual species. For instance he noted that the common pigeonwood (Hedycarya arborea J.R. et G. Forst.) had on occasion three instead of two leaves at the nodes. Not surprisingly he had a sharp eye for hybrids, while his knowledge of the importance of altitude and rainfall sharpened his understanding of the significance of the location of plants, and he was quick to spot a plant straying from its more common area. For instance he noted the presence of Libertia pulchella (R.Br.) Spreng. on a high ridge in the Waitakeres, and Gordyline indivisa (Forst.f.) Steud. on Mt London in the Hunua Ranges, and nearer home a single plant of Astelia nervosa Hook.f. in the upper Piha valley.

His Native Flora of the Waitakere Range Auckland, is reviewed below. An additional work of great value to field workers consisted of his meticulously careful study of the species lists, left by the late Mr Gudex of Hamilton, of his various field trips to different areas in the Waikato. Mr Mead listed the regions dealt with in parallel columns, so that botanist or trapper could see at a glance what species were or were not in a particular area. This work of correlation took much time and care and it is sad that the records could only be issued in cyclostyled form.

Mr Mead was a man of many interests. An ardent trapper, he was responsible for excellent maps showing the various tracks in the Waitakeres - tracks he had in many cases plotted to areas of special interest, scenic or botanical. While Field Advisor to the Auckland Regional Authority, he continued his explorations and study of tracks and his "A Guide to the Waitakere Ranges", subtitled Walking and Tramping Tracks was published by the A.R.A. Valuable notes and comments on the tracks were added. This is now the standard work on such matters and promises to be so for a considerable time to come.

He was a keen member of both the Auckland Tramping Club and the Alpine Club and is now an honorary member of the Alpine Sports Club

and one of the foundation members of the Ruapehu Ski Club. Of this latter club he was very much a foundation member indeed, for he was one who helped to form it, long before anyone conceived of the area as the splendid National Park it is today.

He and his brother, together with a few other enthusiasts, were active in exploration and the study of possible sites for huts, and when two members of the forthcoming Club imported two pairs of skis from Switzerland, Arthur Mead with characteristic resourcefulness made a pair for himself on the model of these.

The mountains called him, but he was also a lover of rivers and one of his happy hunting grounds was the Wanganui River. In 1957 Reed published his charming booklet The Wanganui River subtitled The Story of New Zealand's Most Romantic and Beautiful River. The book was admirably illustrated with numerous well-chosen pictures from various sources. Not surprisingly this account of the River includes its Maori history. He had much love for and interest in the Maori people.

He was a keen churchman and was one year elected President of the Auckland Association of Baptists. In regard to the Maori, he did much spadework for the Baptist Maori Mission Board of which he is now a life member. He also contributed articles to the Journal of the Polynesian Society. Not surprisingly his interest in the Maori mission work and his beloved Wanganui coalesced in his work on Richard Taylor, an early Anglican missionary, and in 1966 he published his book "Richard Taylor, Missionary Tramp". Taylor, incidentally, was an eager student of native plants and that strange parasite Dactylnanthus taylori was a discovery that came to bear his name.

In addition to a most thorough study of diaries, old records and letters, Mr Mead was not satisfied till he had traced the route of this ancient missionary journey along the Wanganui River - a journey taken when the River still wandered through regions of unspoiled beauty. The book consisted largely of extracts from Richard Taylor's diaries connected by suitable explanations and comments.

I leave to the last the discussion of what many people will feel his greatest gift to the city - the number of parks and reserves he was instrumental in obtaining for us. He was a convinced and farsighted conservationist, and as waterworks engineer both in the Hunua and the Waitakeres always had his ear to the ground and through his alertness was able to bring hundreds of acres to the notice of the authorities that otherwise would have been lost to the city for ever. His skill in plotting the water catchment areas and obtaining reserves around them has indeed made for a great enrichment of a large and growing city. We are glad indeed that he received the well merited award of the Loder Cup just before he left us for Wellington. He goes bearing with him the earnest good wishes of all members in our Society and his many friends outside it. For truly, he has served his day and generation well.