

ARTHUR DAVID MEAD 1888 - 1977 AN APPRECIATIONE.D. HATCH

The recent death at 89 of Mr A.D. Mead deprives the Botanical Society of one of its oldest, quietest, most enthusiastic and most knowledgeable members. Miss Crookes has written (Bot. Soc. Newsletter, November 1972. p.2) and others also, of his long work keeping Auckland supplied with water; of his membership of scientific clubs, and clubs that climbed and tramped and botanised; of his successful efforts to preserve the Hunua and Waitakere ranges as forest parks; of his work for the Maori and for the Baptist church; of the books he has written and the people he has helped.

All I can do here is to mourn the loss of a friend. In 1946, when I first met Arthur Mead, I was oscillating between the Parks Dept. and the Waterworks Dept. of the Auckland City Council, trying to establish a nursery of native seedlings at Hamiltons Camp - an area now covered by the lake of the lower Nihotupu dam. As waterworks engineer Mr Mead was in charge of the operation and he went to no end of trouble to help me. I was prepared to find that the engineer knew all about dam construction and pipes and things, but his detailed knowledge of the ranges and their vegetation astounded me. He knew just where to go and when, to find the best seed - how to process it to obtain maximum germination - when to prick the seedlings out - which species would thrive best on the areas left bare by the bulldozers. It was from him that I learned to prick kowhai seed to let the water in and to boil the seed of whau to soften the hard shell. All this and more he taught me in his quiet and unassuming way - anyone less like a boss would be hard to imagine. Yet the work was always done. And when he discovered that I was trying to complete a revision of the orchids he arranged for me to have odd days off to go to the Museum.

Eventually I left the City Council but since we both belonged to the Bot. Soc. and the Museum we continued to meet from time to time over the years. In 1967 when he was working on his Native Flora of the Waitakere Ranges, I was privileged to help him correlate the current names with Cheesemans 1871 'Titirangi' list. I remember a visit he paid me about this time when he was in his early eighties, driving his car over from Piha, tramping through the bush with me all day and driving home again at night. Later, when he was living in Wellington, he wrote to me most enthusiastically about Dr Ross Beever's discovery of Yuania australis in the taraire groves of Karekare - something he had apparently expected to happen. He was then 86! As Miss Crookes says " truly he has served his day and generation well " .