

ARTHUR FARNELL

When Arthur Farnell died in the early spring of last year, the society lost an old and valued friend. Mr Farnell - trained at Kew and elsewhere in the United Kingdom and variously employed in New Zealand at Coromandel, Helensville and, until his retirement, as Superintendent of Grounds with the Auckland Hospital Board - was associated with Auckland Botanical Society affairs, active on its Committee and a frequent leader of trips for most of the 1950's and early 1960's. He was a vice-president for six years and president in 1959.

As one who served with him on the Committee for much of that time, it is pleasant to recall the many associations with such an able and enthusiastic botanist. An extended South Island field trip with him and Carrick Chambers has provided many happy memories of seeking the elusive Pittosporum dallii and P. patulum in the Boulder Lake area of N.W. Nelson, specimens of which he grew for many years at Middlemore Hospital. Mr Farnell delighted in setting-up displays of obscure and confusing divaricating shrubs, many of which he had grown in the hospital grounds. After hopelessly floundering, the "victim" would have the fine points of identification revealed to him by the triumphant collector and grower - altogether a valuable, if frustrating, experience.

The collection at Middlemore was outstanding for its representation of native shrubs and trees from all over New Zealand and many Auckland groups and individuals were privileged to widen their knowledge of "natives" in Mr Farnell's expert company. It is greatly to be regretted that this collection, and the fine examples of Australian ornamentals nearby, have gone back since his retirement. His nurseries provided many fine specimen plants for the Auckland University grounds as well as for the "Botanical Block" across the road from Kirk's Bush, Papakura, which Mr Farnell, along with other Society members, planted, maintained and administered over several years.

When he retired, Mr Farnell developed his hobby of Gerbera breeding into a successful living and he was well known for his specimens and seeds in both local and world horticultural circles. His interest in horticulture, deriving from his training and employment, complemented his love of the native bush and his wide knowledge of its species. This is reflected in his active participation in the Auckland Natural History Club, the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture and the Auckland Horticultural Council on which he was the Society's delegate for several years. Because of this dual interest and his expertise in and devotion to both aspects of botanical science, he was awarded the Diploma of the R.N.Z.I.H. and the Loder Cup.

Though one regrets that Mr Farnell's vast store of botanical knowledge was seldom put into print and that much of value has died with him, he was always ready to pass on his precious information to others where, hopefully, it lives on. Who else, for example, would have noted that puriri fruits send up successive crops of seeds annually, one of the three seeds from each fruit developing each year. He leaves behind a legacy of affection and botanical knowledge to his many friends.

J.A. Rattenbury.