

THISMIA RODWAYI AT PUHIPUHIKatie Reynolds

Towards the end of November 1980 I had a 'phone call from a friend asking me to identify a plant for friend's schoolgirl daughter. "I can but try", I replied, and armed with an address began what proved to be a most interesting and delightful exercise.

Tina and her sister Trixie were boarding privately in Tikipunga in order to attend high school there. By 'phone she told me that the plant was small and saprophytic having no colour in thread-like stems and scale-like leaves. Flowers were transparent and pink to red, and she had found the plant in remnant taraire forest, in litter on the forest floor. "Ha! yoania!" I thought, for this is a plant I long to see. Armed with books and lens I proceeded up to Tikipunga to see the "find". No orchid this! It was as she had described. The fascinating little flower was like a small bright lantern with mitred top and windows. Under a lens the texture was translucent and crystalline. Inside and above the ovary, three large stigmas, pale pale green, positively glowed. They had the appearance of one marvellous three lobed stigma. My memory took me back to a morning in Dr Lucy Moore's office several years before, at Botany Division. There preserved in a bottle she had a Bagnisia flower. With this clue we checked with the description in Flora of New Zealand, Vol. II and found Thismia rodwayi and from there to confirmation in The Oxford Book of New Zealand Plants and Bruce Irwin's fine illustration.

Next I arranged to go up to Puhipuhi to see the growing plant. Tina was at school but had left clear directions for us. The bush, which is damaged taraire remnant, is now shut off from cattle but still shows possum damage. The altitude is 1400 ft. In quite a large area Thismia was growing in one place only, the small patch being not more than half a metre square. We searched throughout and Tina's mother said that the girls had spent considerable time looking for more, but in vain. Other plants of interest there were Pseudopanax edgerleyi and Lophomyrtus bullata.

My warmest thanks go to Tina Hills and her parents. She is to be congratulated too for being so observant. C.W. Devonshire, Mrs Hills and I all thought that even a keen person could be excused for overlooking a few small red flowers almost covered in litter, mistaking them perhaps for fruiting bodies of a small fungus. In searching for such a plant one should proceed on hands and knees. An added advantage would be to be, as Tina was then, fifteen years of age! Here I quote J. Beever on the finding of Yuania. This "find" made my 1980!

MAZUS PUMILIOKatie Reynolds

During October 1981 I was taken up to the Mangonui County to identify a rare fern Christella dentata. The plant I interviewed up there had all the relevant characteristics and I pronounced it to be genuine. Happily, here in my garden Dr John Braggins confirmed my diagnosis so all is well. Mr Bill Sykes also greeted my plant as a well known friend.