

REMINISCENCES

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A FLOWER SET THE SEAL FOR A DYNAMIC INFLUENCE IN MY LIFE -- MY LIFELONG FRIENDSHIP WITH THE "TWO LUCYS"

I think that my interest in plants began in my earliest years, inherited from both my parents and naturally enhanced by the wonderful environment that was my home. Our property in Whangarei "Pukenui" included lovely gardens round the large kauri villa, fine orchards and bush that ran down to the Hatea river and the glorious mangrove forests and their abundant wildlife. On one side our neighbours the Drummonds owned and cherished a similar property; on the other side we had Mair Park, and across the river Dobbie Park on Parahaki - the "Puke" of our "Pukenui". Later Norman Drummond was to give a further 200 acres of bush on Parahaki, adjoining Dobbie Park. It was a little bit like living in a Wild Life Park. Whangarei in those early years had not been overtaken to any great extent by "progress". The Hatea river was unpolluted and was a suitable playground for swimming, messing about in boats and observing wildlife. It was not uncommon to have weka walking round the garden. As one approached them they might walk a little faster, but never showed undue alarm. They were grateful for scraps from the table. Another observation made by Pickmere and Drummond families was that they came to the cackling of hens, to raid the families' hen houses for fresh eggs. The technique was to spear an egg with sharp beak then to make off at speed down to the river and presumably to the chicks. The families concerned considered the weka to be tangata whenua and thus entitled to a share of the eggs! Kotare, kingfisher, nested in holes in the mangroves, and banded rail, spotless crane, Caspian tern, cormorant, pied stilts, and gulls were frequently seen. During some winters kotuku, the white heron, was a distinguished visitor. Each year as the shooting season approached there would be great flocks of teal — as many as 500 on the river.

Because my father kept his launch in a shed at the bottom of the garden, boating, a life long interest, became an extension of our interest in studying wildlife and plants. Whangarei Harbour in those Halcyon days was richly endowed with both. Scientists coming to Whangarei often visited our home, quite often came "down the river" with us. Such was my father's knowledge of the river and his skill in negotiating it in a minimum tide level, that Fred Reynolds, later to become my brother-in-law, said of him that he could "go down the river on a heavy dew".

During her first years as botanist at Auckland War Memorial Museum Lucy M. Cranwell came to Whangarei to speak to the new Gardening Club, formed 1927, and stayed with us at "Pukenui". She also had a trip down the harbour with us. In those days Xeronema callistemon was a "new" plant in New Zealand botany and Lucy expressed interest in my mother's plant of this and in our Poor Knights ngaio, Myoporum laetum var. decumbens. A few years before, in 1924, Whangarei Harbour Board's secretary/engineer Wm. M. Fraser had taken Dr. W.R.B. Oliver to the Poor Knights to meet this "different" plant. Employing considerable skill as

a botanical detective Dr. Oliver established its identity as Xeronema and gave it the descriptive name callistemon - a second species in a hitherto monotypic genus. French botanists had named Xeronema moorei from inland mountains of New Caledonia. From this trip to the Poor Knights Wm. Fraser brought my mother a "fan" of Xeronema. In 1925 another scientific party brought her another fan. These plants, set in fibrous leaf-mould mix in half kerosene tins had grown mightily, rupturing the tins, thus necessitating their being moved on. Two were put in large concrete urns, a piece went into the garden. They obviously enjoyed a warm situation and morning sun.

In 1932 the garden plant showed first the swollen fan, then the emerging peduncle of a coming inflorescence. Mother wrote to Lucy M. C. asking her, "Shall I send it down to you?" Lucy's immediate response was a telegram saying "Don't pick it. We'll come up." When the flower was at its best, she came to Whangarei bringing with her Lucy B. M., Dr. H.H. Allan and Mr. Norman Potts of Opotiki.

A pleasant day down Whangarei Harbour rounded off this very memorable weekend during which we saw the first mainland flowering of raupo-taranga, Xeronema callistemon, Poor Knights lily. In 1933 Mr. Arthur Pycroft (old Pykie!) found a further population of Xeronema on a rocky outcrop on Taranga (Hen Is.) On this glorious October day in 1932 we enjoyed the beauty of the Whangarei Harbour, dined on tipa (scallops) gathered on Kenny Rob's bank, and visited a splendid population of Loxoma cunninghamii -- there finding a bonus, no less, Pterostylis plumosa. Most importantly for me because of a flower there began a most dynamic influence in my life, my lifelong and wonderful friendship with the two very dear Lucys. I can truthfully say that, botanically, I have been "brought up" by them. I am privileged indeed.

THE BUSTLE, THE FEARS AND THE JOYS, THE COMRADESHIP AND THE BEAUTY THAT MADE THE FORMER
CHEESEMAN MEMORIAL SHOW OF NATIVE SPRING FLOWERS

I first met Lucy Cranwell on the Hockey field when she was playing for A.U.C. and I for Whangarei High School. By 1929 she had graduated M.A. and had been appointed Botanist at the Auckland War Memorial Museum -- the big new Museum in the Domain. A year or so later she came to Whangarei to speak to Whangarei's new Gardening Club, formed in 1927. She stayed with us at "Pukenui"* and came down the harbour with us.

In 1933 Lucy, who was not only Botanist at the Museum but also unofficially a very fine P.R. Officer, initiated her first Display of Native Flowers to honour T.F. Cheeseman, former Botanist and Curator of the Auckland Museum. Naturally we sent our contribution from Whangarei.

From a modest display the Cheeseman Memorial Show of Native Spring Flowers became an annual event for the Museum, a huge one involving many people who gave their time, labour, material and expertise unstintingly. If there could have been criticism of the amounts of material used I am very sure that the tremendous good that the show did quite outweighed any harm done. The crowds of children who came to the Museum learned to love and respect their heritage. Enthusiasts from all over N.Z. sent material. Many people with fine private gardens contributed much of the big material. By no means was it all torn from vandalised bush. As

* Pickmeres

events have progressed I feel that even if it had been — and very definitely it was not — how much better that it should be used thus, to give pleasure to hundreds of people and to educate children, than that it should be wantonly destroyed. Over the past two decades I have seen hills and valleys denuded of their bush for the planting of Monterey pines. One area that used to be ablaze each spring with carmine rata — even then considered rare and local — and containing makamaka, Ackama rosaefolia and other choice plants, now sports pines and Eupatorium. It is not an improvement.

I began helping during the early years of the Cheeseman Shows. My mother and I picked from our large garden and collected material to be railed down. Helping at the Museum I was always very proud of the Whangarei material. Among the school exhibits a small sole teacher school at Helena Bay always sent exquisite material beautifully packed. I stayed with Mrs Cranwell and Lucy in Crescent Road Parnell. The work was hard and the days were very long but it was also a lot of fun. Comradeship was the keynote. We borrowed large barrels from one of the breweries and each evening after the Museum had closed we dis-assembled the show, submerging the plant material in these large barrels of water. The following morning we would shake out the kowhai, kumarahou, clematis &c. and set the show up again. In this way we kept material fresh for all of ten days of a show. There were always guides to conduct schools and students round the show and to answer visitors' questions. We had sheets of canvas to help contain the mess and to protect the floors.

There were humorous incidents. One day I came upon the Mayor of Auckland, then Sir John Allum, declaiming to distinguished friends, "Of course this" — a beautiful large bowl of kowhai ngutu kaka, Clianthus puniceus — "is not a Native!" This was too much for this Guide, young and perhaps brash. I stepped forward — "Excuse me Sir —". Every year a Mr Butterworth of Papakura brought a large and very beautiful bunch of N.S.W. waratah. This of course we could not use in our display of N.Z. Natives. Instead it had pride of place in the Museum's Hall of Memories.

Many of the displays were ecological in nature. I remember a Mr Attwood from Ruapehu who brought and set up a very beautiful display of plants from his region. He was virtually stone deaf but was very knowledgeable and very enthusiastic. He had a beautiful painted mountain backdrop and in front of this a slope in which grew — growing in pots concealed in the slope — lovely mountain plants including Pittosporum turneri.

Several artists made posters which were displayed round the City. One year Betty Molesworth and I approached the display artist of Milne and Choyce to ask him to put some large arrangements in his Queen St window. Mr Gruzelier acceded to this request and we were very proud to see our Spring Show advertised in this prestigious store. He also gave us valuable tips about making the most of our material. This is typical of the way in which Auckland responded to this great show. Dick Scobie was the Museum's first Education Officer, Olive Lloyd the second. Olive had vast knowledge and a tremendous sense of humour. I can still picture her as we walked yet again up those stairs at the Museum. She pretended to half crawl, saying as she went "I dreamt that I dwelt in ma-a-a-rble Halls!"

It is interesting to remember those early days of the shows and people like Eric Godley, Charles Fleming, Joan Dingley, Frank Newhook &c. Then

— from about 1935 on — they were the up-and-coming young students. After having carved out, each one, a very distinguished career, they are now retired. I can remember the great excitement at the Museum when at the time of the Show (1937?) Graham Turbott was sent a takahe for display. Lucy Cranwell's personality was volatile and very charismatic. Without a doubt she was the kingpin in the structure of the team that helped to run the show. People loved to work for her. Director Dr Gilbert Archey and his scientific and custodian staff were all proud of their "Botany's" achievement and all encouraged and helped wherever they could. At that time Lucy B. Moore was working very hard in her role as zoology demonstrator at A.U.C. Nevertheless she found time to drop in and see us all, to share with us her wisdom and her knowledge. Particularly she provided an all important serenity for friend and colleague Lucy Cranwell. I think that every one of us, young and old, in that happy band of workers, even that 50 plus years ago, recognised the importance of this friendship/partnership. Sharing as they did a lifelong interest that had both breadth and depth, their differing personalities were at the same time complementary. I can remember thinking as I listened to Lucy B. M. giving her fine, often moving Lucy Cranwell Lecture — how could one person (L.M.C.) achieve so much in one lifetime? Yet this lecture had much of Lucy B. Moore herself in it. Her career has paralleled that of her colleague. Her career is equally distinguished. One thing is sure. There are a great number of botanists, professional and amateur, who have much in their lives for which they can thank one or both of the two Lucys.

"You never have seen this World aright until the Sea itself floweth in your veins,
'til you are crowned with the Heavens and clothed with the Stars
The Stars are your jewels"

- Travers

In 1938 Lucy Cranwell was overseas pursuing her study of fossil pollens. I was asked by Dr Gilbert Archey to work at the Auckland Museum and with Betty Molesworth to organise and run The Cheeseman Memorial Show of Native Flowers. By this time I was an old hand at the Cheeseman Shows. I flatted in Princes Street with Lucy Moore during this three months. She was zoology demonstrator at Auckland University at this time. Princes St is a pleasant walk away from the Museum. During my stay with Lucy B. M. we had several interesting "spare time" outings, as for instance a beautiful day at Rangitoto with her students. It was a very pretty day during the third week in August. I was enchanted by the beauty of the great dells of kidney fern Cardiomanes reniforme in the dark lava, the masses of puawananga Clematis paniculata in full bloom, and the profusion of kohurangi Brachyglottis (Senecio) kirkii. Back at Auckland University that night I watched a zoology demonstrator set up her lab for the following day and we looked at some of the days "finds" through a binocular microscope.

On another occasion we spent a night at Anawhata on Auckland's West Coast, and following this spent a delightful day on the beach and rocks. The sea was calm and the tide a record low which was ideal. Lucy told me that Pa Bethell, of Bethells Beach fame always warned all visitors to the coast, "Never turn your back to this West Coast sea". Although the sea on this day appeared to be completely innocent and tame, we kept this warning in mind and remained alert throughout.

During the 1930s both the Lucys were studying seaweeds, and because of my boating life I thought that it would be useful for me to learn those that I would be likely to encounter, and particularly the applications for their use — e.g. potash, or edible. At Anawhata I picked three red seaweeds and asked Lucy their names. She told me Pterocladia lucida, P. capillacea and Melanthalia abscissa. I repeated these names after her and "Yes", I said, "I shall remember!" During the following three years I did not think a great deal about them. However whenever I met them I did recognise them and greet them by name.

Then during the course of the War, suddenly and shockingly there was Pearl Harbour and abruptly Japan was our enemy. One of the immediate results of this was that our supplies of all-important agar were cut off. It is used in many manufacturing processes, but more important, because it can be sterilized at high temperatures it is an important culture medium. Lucy B. M. by now a Botany Division scientist was given an important assignment — to find a New Zealand seaweed that could be processed to make agar. Having sorted out the type of seaweed suitable she came to Whangarei and stayed with us at Pukenui. As we talked after dinner she asked me, "Do you know where Pterocladia lucida grows?" Yes I did, and named several localities, for it is not uncommon. "Good!" said Lucy, "your answer has made my journey from Wellington worth while!" She went on to explain her reasons and to ask me if I could gather for her four large sacksful of Pterocladia lucida, wash it in fresh water, dry it and rail it to Wellington. Yes I could, and gladly. It was for Lucy wasn't it? And for the War Effort? and it involved the Sea, an element with which I am supremely at home and happy.

At Smugglers Cove, just outside the Whangarei harbour I got into the water and without undue effort gathered the four sacksful of the weed.

The next part involved a whole days work, and more. ON our large drying green — the back lawn where the clotheslines were — I used a hose, two large galvanised tubs and some large sheets of scrim. Today's sheet plastic would be better. The resulting dry clean Pterocladia was firmly stuffed into four large clean sacks and dispatched to Lucy in Wellington.

An exercise such as this, hard work but also well worth while and thoroughly enjoyable, often brings a bonus. In this case it was the tubsful of rich dark red wash water strongly redolent of the sea and obviously too good to be jettisoned. I gave it to several plants that I thought would appreciate it including our large raupo-taranga Xeronema callistemon in its concrete urn. This got the lions share of this "Sea Wine". The following year xeronema rewarded us by putting on a glorious display, producing no fewer than twenty-six large crimson racemes of flower.

Lucy's research was supremely successful and a small agar manufacturing industry set up. Coastal communities found employment in gathering the weed. In Japan the Pterocladia counterpart was carried up into the mountain snow where it was frozen. From this fact Lucy deduced that Pterocladia requires freezing in order to release its gel.

For me the gathering of this first quantity of Pterocladia lucida was a very useful "fun" thing exercising the sea water that seems to have been injected into my veins at birth.

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