

BOOK REVIEW

by Brian H. Wilson

"RICCARTON BUSH AND RICCARTON HOUSE RESERVE" I am indebted to the Editor for asking me to review this booklet for, notwithstanding its attractive cover and my interest in Native Plants I could have so easily overlooked it.

The historical section holds interest for all of us imparting a variety of snippets of information. The Avon it seems was named after a Scottish stream not as you and I had supposed.

Dr. Cockayne's chapter on the Botanical History and importance of "The Bush" is followed by a reasonably detailed descriptive list of the plants by Flora B. Murray, M.A. and a comprehensive list from which it is heartening to see that only four plants included in Dr. Cockayne's list of 1906 failed to catch Prof. Wall's eye in 1923. This list is marred by a number of spelling and other errors.

"A walk through the grounds of Riccarton House" does that for the reader in a pleasant way without loss of energy and the more serious reader is given a list of publications for research.

The illustrations are good and the end is reserved for the By-Laws which don't have much appeal although odd inconsistencies do appear; "6 No person shall shoot any animal. 7 any dog may be destroyed!" Members must leave their catapults at home.

A satisfying booklet.

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39 pages.

BOTANICAL RECORDS

by Colin Burrows

Botanical exploration and recording in New Zealand has reached an interesting stage (as witnessed by parts to the Biological Flora of N.Z. published recently in the N.Z.J. of Botany and various other recent publications on plant distributions). We require precise data about distributions of species because not only can useful circumstantial evidence about the history and ecology of those species be deduced from full distributional information, but because we are witnessing devastating changes to our environment, some of which will completely eliminate some species from many places. This will apply not only to prominent plants such as trees and shrubs, but to humbler species of swamps, riverbeds, tussock grasslands etc. We know that this has already happened in some cases and sometimes the changes were caused by our forbears. One would dearly like to know, for example, the species which were present in the now extinct patches of bush at Papanui, Rangiora and Woodend, or in the Christchurch swamps.

The C.B.S. is one of the groups which can best undertake such recording because it has a following of informed botanists who know the significance of their finds. May I make a plea for the keeping of

complete records when you are botanizing. If you are collecting, in a notebook which includes notes about each collecting locality, give each specimen a number (by year and including your initials is most convenient, I.E. C.B. 69 121) and label the specimen with the same number. This is known as the collectors number and it can be very useful in keeping track of localities of collection and in tracing misplaced specimens.

From the point of view of critical records, and this applies especially to the less commonplace species, species near or outside the known limit of their distribution, possible hybrids or other unusual specimens, or if you are collecting in a little-frequented area, it is essential to have full notes and, if possible specimens which can be placed in one of the larger herbaria. These vouch for the authenticity of the discoveries. Unless the plant is rare, in which case notes should only be made, collect a specimen, preferably in duplicate, press and dry it, record the locality fully and habitat, altitude and any other relevant information.

If you have your own herbarium you may wish to keep a specimen but for critical records it is best to have at least one specimen housed in one or more of the larger herbaria such as that of Botany Division, D.S.I.R., or the University. Then it is accessible to any scientist investigating particular problems. The herbaria are always willing to accept such specimens.

It is essential for ecologists and others wanting to use distributional data to be able to refer to herbarium specimens and it is surprising how few of these there are for even some of the commonplace species (as can be seen from the Biological Flora maps).

It has been tacit until now that I have been talking about native species, but interesting distributions of introduced plants should be treated in the same way.

SEASONAL CHANGES IN A CHRISTCHURCH LAWN

by Bryony Macmillan

Marked changes in the appearance of a lawn in the north west of Christchurch (N.Z.M.S.l. S84:960585) reflect the relative vigor of different plants in the different seasons. The lawn is unshaded and flat, on light sandy soil, and has been maintained by mowing, as short turf, for forty years. It is neither weeded nor watered.

By recording the leaves touched by a pointer lowered vertically at 10 centimetre square intervals over a fixed square metre, these figures were obtained:

	20 July 1968	10 Nov. 1968	23 Mar. 1969
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Narrow-leaved and tufted plants

Festuca rubra ssp. *commutata* Chewings

fescue *Agrostis tenuis* and browntop

27

38

33