

## THE BOTANICAL SOCIETY IN THE SEVENTIES

Since its inception (as the Native Flora Society) in 1952, the Canterbury Botanical Society has had the normal ups and downs of any organisation, but it is now well established. Membership is growing and there is a vigour apparent which augurs well for the future. To become President of the Society at this stage is rather like taking over the helm of a ship flying through the water, its sails filled by a fine spanking breeze. However, as with steering a ship, it is always necessary to look ahead.

In which direction should the Society steer its activities? Individual thoughts may differ, but all are governed by the Society's aims and objects. The two, in particular, which appear to provide most of the direction for our activities are :-

- (a) "To promote the interest in the study of botany especially that of New Zealand and in particular the native flora of Canterbury".
- (b) "To promote the preservation of New Zealand plants in their natural habitat, to encourage public interest in it, and to cooperate with Public Authorities and others in the attainment of this object".

With regard to the first, most people join an organisation for the purpose of obtaining something from it. Monthly meetings and field trips alone, are often not sufficient to cater for the needs of many, particularly new members who may be complete novices. This year the committee decided to look at the needs of newer members, and taking a lead from some learners' classes that were held a few years ago, a sub-committee has been given the responsibility of organising a series of classes, or workshops for novice members. The success of this venture has yet to be discovered, but with the number of new members growing, it is quite possible that the idea may have to be continued on a yearly basis and perhaps even widened in its scope. Some thought could even be given to starting a special group for school children.

In the past, mention has been made of the part the Society can play as a recording agent. There is no doubt that we could, and should, play a major part in recording the vegetation of Canterbury. Members, on both official and private outings, range over many parts of the Province and it would reflect greatly on the Society if the knowledge thus gained could be suitably recorded.

It would also be a considerable achievement if we could undertake the compilation of a checklist of the flora of Canterbury. There are many lists for individual areas and there are even one or two more

embracing lists for the whole Province, but nothing that is in any way satisfactory. It would be quite a large task, but nothing that is beyond our capabilities. The most important requirement is the will to do it.

In conservation and preservation there is still a wide field. The larger issues of beech forests and Heaphy tracks may gain all the publicity and divert people's attention from things nearer to home, but it is in our own Province that we should also be looking. As an organisation we are still relatively small, but there is no doubt that in the future we must be prepared to become more positively and actively involved with the preservation of particular types and areas of vegetation, or of individual species.

Finally there is membership. To enable the Society to keep on being a viable body we need new members. New members to offset natural losses, to bring in fresh ideas and to build up our Society to a size which would enable it to effectively play its part in the preservation of the native flora of Canterbury and New Zealand.

Lawrie Metcalf

PRESIDENT

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FRONTICEPIECE

Mr. Cecil H. Dunn has provided us with a drawing of Baumea rubiginosa (Spring.) Boeck., a plant that is a member of the Cyperaceae family. Dr. Elizabeth Edgar comments that Baumea rubiginosa is rare in Canterbury. The specimen from which the drawing was made was found recently at Journeys End at the foot of Mt. Grey.

The finders of this plant travelled to Journeys End in search of another even more rare Baumea, Baumea tenax, recorded by Arnold Wall in 1922. They failed to find Baumea tenax but found Baumea rubiginosa.

A few plants were discovered in a boggy portion of an area which the farmer is endeavouring to cultivate. It seems likely that when the land is cultivated this species will disappear from this area. These Baumea have most attractive, small, elliptic, yellow orange nuts.

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