

MYOSOTIS PYGMAEA VAR. PYGMAEA

by John Thompson

It was quite a thrill to discover growing in an open rock crevice on Mt. Herbert on the 3rd December, 1975 two small rosettes of Myosotis pygmaea var. pygmaea. One rosette measured 3 cm. across and the other 2 cm. each contained one small branch, less than 1 cm. long, with a tiny single, open, white flower no more than 2 cm. across.

We revisited the site on 3rd March, 1976 and noticed that the plants had shed their seeds. No further flowering stems were evident. Some 200 yards away we found a further plant of this species growing under the shelter of a rock. This was a more robust plant with several branches, in length from 2 to 6 cm., two of them bearing white flowers. When these flowers were examined later under a microscope it was seen that the colour of the petals was a delicate light blue.

Arnold Wall climbed Mt. Herbert over 100 times in search of plants yet there is no mention in his "Botany of Christchurch" of his having noticed Myosotis pygmaea on Mt. Herbert.

The Botany Division's herbarium contains only two Banks Peninsula specimens of Myosotis pygmaea var. pygmaea, CHR 10964, undated, collected by R.M. Laing on "Hill tops Governors Bay" and CHR 94349 collected on 30th August, 1956 by P.D. Shallard and N.T. Moar at the "Sign of the Bell Bird, Port Hills, amongst rocks".

The herbarium of the Canterbury University contains no specimens of this Myosotis from Banks Peninsula but has one collected by Dr. C.J. Burrows in January, 1957 in the Craigieburn Range.

It might be thought that such an indefatigable collector as J.F. Armstrong, could have seen this species but the Armstrong herbarium has no such specimens relating to Banks Peninsula.

Mr. L.J. Metcalf can produce specimens collected by him on the Ellesmere Spit in 1946. However Dr. C.J. Burrow's Ellesmere Spit plant lists of 1969 and 1970 do not include Myosotis pygmaea nor was it seen by any members of the Canterbury Botanical Society on the Society's two trips to the Spit.

We have recently searched the rocks around the Sign of the Bell Bird and the Hill tops above Governors Bay without finding any trace of Myosotis pygmaea.

The plants seen by us on Mt. Herbert are the only recent findings and the only live plants known to me on Banks Peninsula and the Christchurch environs. I shall be very glad to hear if any of my readers has seen this plant on the Peninsula recently.

The "Bellbird" specimens collected on 30th August included flowers as did ours of 3rd December and 3rd March. This species appears to have quite an extended flowering season.

My thanks go to Dr. L.B. Moore for her kindness in identifying the Mt. Herbert plants and for supplying information on the Botany Division's herbarium.