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***Hebe matthewsii* Rediscovered**

*Tony Druce (Pinehaven) and
Shannel Courtney (Nelson)*

Hebe matthewsii was described by T F Cheeseman in the "Manual of the New Zealand Flora" in 1906, and the distribution given as "Canterbury – Southern Alps, Haast! Armstrong! Otago – Milford Sound, Enys! Humboldt Mountains, H J Matthews!" He remarked that it was "a handsome plant, often cultivated in gardens in the South Island". A plate drawn by Matilda Smith was included in the "Illustrations of the New Zealand Flora" edited by Cheeseman and published in 1914. Cheeseman states that the specimen figured in the plate came from plants cultivated in Mr Matthews' garden. No new localities were given for the species, either in the "Illustrations" or in the second edition of the "Manual of the New Zealand Flora" published in 1925. L B Moore, writing in the "Flora of New Zealand, Volume 1", published in 1961, gave the distribution as "Otago; Canterbury Alps?", implying that no further specimens had been seen and that the Canterbury Alps locality was in doubt. She "retained [the species] because it shows several characters not easily attributed to hybridism between any two [species] growing in the same areas". And that's how things remained until February of this year (1989).

Along with Peter Williams (Botany Division, Nelson) Roland Heine (Nelson), Jan and Arnold Heine (Lower Hutt) and Barry Spring-Rice (Rotorua), we were on an expedition to study the vegetation and flora of Bald Knob Ridge and the "Turks Cap" Range in North-west Nelson.

Bald Knob Ridge is some 9km long, narrow, north-south trending, and lies between the Owen marble massif to the east and the Matiri plateau to the west. It rises only a few hundred metres above a silver beech bushline and is composed of granite at its southern end and Tertiary sedimentary rocks at its northern end (mostly calcareous mudstone and sandstone, but with some limestone lenses also). Much of the surrounding country bears scars caused by the Murchison earthquake of 1929. Although the ridge itself is relatively gentle and easily traversed, access is not straightforward as there are no tracks leading to the tops.

On the first day, all except one of us (SC) had flown in by helicopter to the northern end of Bald Knob Ridge and established a base camp at the bushline. On the second day of the expedition we take up our separate stories.

(Tony Druce) The day dawned perfect on the tops but below us the whole of the Buller basin was filled with a sea of fog. Down there somewhere Shannel was sloggng his way up from the Owen Valley. We had arranged to meet late in the afternoon towards the southern end of the ridge. We slowly worked our way south, stopping at intervals to record and photograph the vegetation and plants. By mid-afternoon we were nearly at the end of the Tertiary rocks which were limestone at this point. Here three of our party waited while Peter, Jan and I descended some 200 metres to a saddle where the rocks changed to granite. On looking over the summit ridge I was relieved and delighted to see Shannel, heavily laden, slowly climbing up below us. (Little did I guess at this time that both Shannel and the other three had in their hands specimens of *Hebe mathewsii*.) When I met Shannel some 15 minutes later he wasted no time in producing a piece of a *Hebe*, unknown to either of us, that he had collected on the way up. Later, when the whole party had reassembled further north along the ridge, Roland casually asked me what a *Hebe* was that he had collected in the limestone area where the three of them had waited – he had seen only one plant and he didn't know what it was. There was no doubt about it – it was the same as Shannel's!

I don't remember exactly when I entertained the idea that this *Hebe* might be the long-lost *H. mathewsii* but it was some time after I returned to Wellington. I found out later that Shannel had independently had the same idea. I looked up *H. mathewsii* in Cheeseman's "Illustrations" and obtained on loan the type specimen from the Auckland Institute and Muesum (AK 7955, Humbolt Mountains, Otago, H J Matthews). There seemed little doubt that the plants on Bald Knob Ridge belonged to this species.

The two pieces that had been collected were carefully looked after for the rest of the trip, lasting nearly a week, and used for cutting material when we got back – Roland in Nelson and myself in Pinhaven. When I last heard, Roland's had not rooted; but my two have, and are now (28.8.89) potted up and beginning to grow. Further cuttings will be taken as soon as these two plants have branched.

(Shannel Courtenay) While the rest of the party were travelling southwards along Bald Knob Ridge I made my way on foot to keep the rendezvous. My route started from the east branch of Johnston Creek, a tributary of the Owen River. I followed this up to a major headwater fork and from there took a leading spur to arrive at the bushline at 1250m (grid ref M28 625568).

On the ridge, several metres above me, I noticed a small group of robust-

looking plants of a *Hebe* species I wasn't familiar with. They were widespread, low-statured shrubs reaching a height of about 70cm. The leaves were dark green, shiny, fleshy, about 3cm long and elliptic-oblong in shape. Some secondary venation was evident on the leaves which were all twisted at the petiole into one horizontal plane, along the spreading branches. The distinguishing features of the plants were their stoutness, the semi-succulence, shininess and size of the leaves (relatively large for an alpine *Hebe*), and the absence of a sinus in the leaf-bud.

The colony was on a substrate of light, chalky, calcareous siltstone, and the site was quite open and dry. The community in which the *Hebe* plants grew was dominated by *Poa colensoi*. Associated small shrubs and herbs were *Gaultheria* sp. (unnamed), *Coprosma cheesemanii*, *Cassinia leptophylla* var. (*C. vauvillier-sii*), *Celmisia spectabilis* var., *C. monroi* var., and sparse tussocks of *Chionochloa pallens* var.

A cursory scout in the general vicinity of the colony revealed no further plants to add to the three or four seen in this small area.

CONCLUSION

As far as we know, the original plants of *Hebe matthewsii* are no longer in cultivation in New Zealand. Mr L J Metcalfe, Director of Parks and Recreation, Invercargill, does not have any, but it is possible that some are still in cultivation in Dunedin Botanic Gardens. Linda Kristensen who has recently been in New Zealand from Denmark made enquiries for us as to whether the species was still cultivated in Europe and apparently it isn't. However, the British author, Douglas Chalk, in his book "Hebes and Parahebes", published in New Zealand by the Caxton Press in 1988, lists *H. matthewsii* as "mostly a border filling shrub", thereby implying that it is still in cultivation, at least in Britain.

The rediscovery of *Hebe matthewsii* in North-west Nelson, 370km north-east of the Humboldt Mountains, after a lapse of more than 83 years, leads us to expect that the species will eventually turn up somewhere in between. At present, though, we know of only some four or five adult plants in the wild, no seedlings, and two (perhaps four) rooted cuttings in cultivation. A search in the Humboldt Mountains could show whether the species still survives there.

Rangi's Bush, Pukerua Bay

Maggy Wassilieff¹

INTRODUCTION

Rangi's Bush is a small (4.17ha) remnant of low kohekohe forest located just north of the Whenua Tapu cemetery (NZMS1, Sheet N160/414505; NZMS 260, Sheet R26/674157). The stand of forest occurs on a gentle slope of colluvium at the foot of hills that border the Pukerua Fault. The land is flat in the eastern sector, slopes gently down to a small stream that bisects the stand and rises gently to a smaller area west of the stream. The soils of the area are loessial loams and land surrounding the forest has been successfully converted to pasture. The altitude is 60m.

¹ 69 Tiber Street, Island Bay, Wellington