

EILEEN FAIRBAIRN

Miss Eileen Fairbairn, member of the Canterbury Botanical Society for many years, died suddenly in her home in Christchurch on Sunday, 9th August, 1981.

She was known, admired, and loved by many people whose paths had touched hers in one or more of her numerous and varied interests. As a Teacher at Christchurch Girls' High School she had enlivened the study of Geography, Biology and Mathematics for many girls with her bright incisive teaching, her modern methods, and by taking them out of the class-room into the hills and mountains well before field trips were an accepted part of education. The annual picnic to Corsair Bay in the Thirties was enriched by object lessons on volcanic dykes, while at least one pupil remembers how solid geometry and the relationship between a sphere and an infinity of cones was illustrated by plane-nuts from Cranmer Square. Old friends remember her climbing mountains, ski-ing and exploring in New Zealand and overseas, while countless numbers were fortunate to hear her describe her travels in strange parts of the world.

But it was as a botanist and gardener that she was best known to the members of the Canterbury Botanical Society, her membership going back to the days when it was called the Native Flora Society. Over the years she was one of its most regular and active members, and a contributor to its Journal. Indeed just ten years ago she wrote an article for the Journal about her own experiences re-establishing native trees and shrubs at Bealey Crag on the way to Arthur's Pass, a hill slope area that had been burnt and grazed and later invaded by a tangle of broom, bramble and manuka. This piece of land which she purchased 30 years ago is well known now by Eileen Fairbairn's friends who were welcomed there and encouraged to join her conducted tour around it to admire the few original big trees, the growth of the hundreds of beech seedlings she planted, and the