

## PLEASE VOLUNTEER

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**“Your future begins here.”** This slogan at the main entrance gates of Lincoln University could apply to the Canterbury Botanical Society, as my future began here.

### MY TIME IN THE CANTERBURY BOTANICAL SOCIETY

In the late 1960's Jane McArthur, the treasurer of Bot. Soc, introduced me to Ross Elder the president, and Yvonne Elder. On the following Saturday I went on my first Bot. Soc. field trip, to Lake Rubicon. There Dr. Lucy Moore lent me her hand lens, and taught me much about native orchids. I was most impressed, as I didn't know that such incredibly beautiful little flowers existed. My next field trip was to Prices Valley reserve, where Dr Brian Molloy escorted the group and taught us how to identify trees by their trunks; what an exciting day!

In 1971 Bot. Soc. held its first summer camp at Altimarlock in the Awatere Valley, Marlborough. I did not attend because the baby of our household was tiny, but everyone came back with wonderful stories. However in 1972 my in-laws came to New Zealand, so I left them in charge of my home and family while I dashed off to my first summer camp, held at the Amuri Ski field on Mt. Patrick, near Hanmer. In my youth I had tramped with friends in Arthurs Pass National Park, mainly concentrating on getting from A to B, but at Amuri I encountered a wonderful group of friends and spectacular alpine plants such as gentians, celmisia, leucogenes, haastia, cotula, penwipers, swainsona, aciphylla, hebes and pimelea, and tasted the fruits of snow totara (*Podocarpus nivalis*) and *Gaultheria*.

One day a few of us rose very early and walked to the south end of the St James Range, where we could see down to the Hanmer Plain and the Waiiau River and up to Lewis Pass. We climbed Mt. Captain (1785 m) and nearby Mt Jaga, wandering amongst beautiful alpine gardens and spectacular scree plants. All day we had been in brilliant sunshine, but when we arrived at the top of the ski tow on Mt Patrick (1772 m), the Clarence Valley below us was filled with dense fog. The sun was behind us and our shadows projected on to the fog were encircled by haloes; my first Spectre of the Brocken. My experiences at camp reinforced my desires to become more active in this Society.

I attended as many meetings, workshops, field trips and camps as I could manage plus I spent my housekeeping money on a hand lens and some botany books. Though this was not very popular at home, I was on a huge learning curve and my confidence and understanding of our flora, fauna and countryside were expanding in leaps and bounds. Margaret Hines, the secretary, had noticed this and said to me, "You are very observant, and one day soon you will be a leader in our society." I laughed and told her that she must have confused me with someone else, because I could not spell all those botanical names that she and John Thompson used in the newsletters and journals. Not long after this conversation, Jane McArthur said to me "You have been about long enough; I am going overseas, how about taking over as treasurer?" As treasurer, I thoroughly enjoyed helping with all types of Bot. Soc. activities, and in 1990, in recognition for services rendered through the years, I was elected a life member of the society.

### EXILE TO NELSON

I knew all the members of the Botanical Society, who were like family. When I left Christchurch in 1990 to live in Nelson, I missed you all deeply. I was homesick for familiar friends and surroundings, and felt very sad for several months. Then suddenly I got three part-time jobs, and was overrun with invitations to lead field trips and address meetings. I made new friends and went tramping, exploring, botanizing and bird watching.

For a short time I had temporary employment on a tree crop farm learning about subtropical fruit trees and their cultivation, but soon along came two permanent part-time jobs. One was with Nikau Gardens (a native plant nursery) and the other with Nelson City Council, organizing community tree planting. For this job my salary was paid by "Of Course You Can, Canterbury" an award sponsored by Trust Bank Canterbury. I stayed with NCC for 10 years, and each year I planted 1,000-1,500 trees, shrubs, and ferns. I organized thousands of school children plus community groups such as Lions, Guides and Scouts etc.; the children named me "Treelady". All over Nelson city our plantings enhanced school grounds, neighbourhood walkways, parks, reserves, roadsides and waterways, and formed bird corridors. Also we tidied up unsightly areas of our city and dealt a blow to problems plants such as barberry, old man's beard, banana passionfruit, climbing dock, privet, bay tree, spindle berry, tradescantia, lemon balm, fan palm, bone seed, Mexican daisy, selaginella and, of course, gorse and broom; no wonder I regarded Nelson

city as the “Weed Capital of the South Island.” Whenever possible we gathered rubbish from Nelson’s long coast line and beaches.

I still work for the Nikau Gardens native plant nursery, where I arrange the public buying area, label plants, and help and advise customers. I am an active member of the Nelson Botanical Society, Forest and Bird, and the Nelson Fern Society. In my spare time I make woollen clothing and blankets for war-orphaned children of Bosnia and Serbia. This is a world-wide project called “Operation Cover Up”, which has a very strong branch in Nelson.

### **WHAT THE BOTANICAL SOCIETY HAS DONE FOR ME**

Being an active member of Bot. Soc. can lead to employment opportunities. Besides learning about plants, I learnt a lot of skills, such as how to run a field trip, organize a camp, cook for 30 or 50 people, run a meeting, thank the speaker, do a plant survey, give first aid, and deal with search and rescue. Around the age of 35, I learnt how to make instant potato. So, you see, it is never too late to learn. I have found outings with Bot. Soc. most interesting and enjoyable. You learn about flora, fauna and geology, visit and explore places that had been just names on a map, develop an interesting hobby that will last you all your life, and build long-lasting friendships. In 1969 \$2.25 for a sub was money well spent.

There is no better way to see the countryside, make new friends and climb the ladder of success than by joining a botanical society and taking part in its activities and administration. I began Bot. Soc. life as an enthusiastic home gardener and have become a keen amateur botanist, through having been nurtured by the kindness, generosity and understanding of Society members. Throughout the passing years I have quietly found my way about in the botanical and conservation world. Thanks to all my friends I have come a long way.

### **WHAT YOU MUST DO FOR THE BOTANICAL SOCIETY**

What Margaret Hines said is true; within a decade new members are well qualified to lead or at least help with the administration of our Botanical Society. To those persons who have been in the society for ten years or more and never helped with a camp or workshop, led a field trip, assisted Friday night meetings or written an article for the newsletter or journal: it’s time you did! This society has benefitted from a strong nucleus of amateur and professional people who have given generously of their time

and skills, but you cannot expect it to keep up the same momentum as it has for the last 50 years, without continued help from its members.

I joined the Botanical Society during Ross Elder's presidency (1968-1973). Then Lawrie Metcalf took over, and in 1975 was followed by Bryony Macmillan. During the 1970s the membership of the Canterbury Botanical Society expanded dramatically. Amongst the new members were Father Williams, Graeme MacRaid, Jean McCallion, Philippa Horn, Valerie Lovis, David Norton, Tony Burnett, and six friends with geological interests - the Sutherlands, O'Briens and the Lakes. They are among the stalwarts (I'm sorry if I have missed anyone's name) who have kept the wheels of our society turning, all having held positions of office, some several times over.

Members who joined during the 1980s took positions of office through the 1990s. Unfortunately gaps began to occur during the 1990s, leaving some positions unfilled all year. In 2004 we even lack a president, which is serious. The president, secretary, treasurer and editors of the journal and the newsletter have difficult tasks, and need your help to keep the society running smoothly. Please volunteer and spread the work load, otherwise the standard of our Botanical Society will decline.

The journal and the newsletter are our vital communication links. John Ward has produced the newsletter over a long period. John Thompson edited the first 14 journals, beginning in 1968, Ross Elder edited nos. 15-21, David Norton 21-27, Colin Burrows 28-34, and Warwick Harris 35-37. I am sure that Peter Wardle, our new botanical editor, would like to be surprised by receiving articles from members who so far have never written an article for the journal. Put your thinking caps on and please send in an article for Journal 39 - 2005.

**REFERENCE:** Canterbury Botanical Society Journals Volumes 1-37