

Colin James Burrows

1931 - 2014

Bryony Macmillan



While relinquishing Colin from the beauty of the natural world, botany, and conservation, is very hard indeed, he had suffered enough through illness for any man to bear, without complaint. To read the story of his life and scholarship (Kelly 1994, 2014) is exhilarating and might be called Processes of Botanical Change or Colin Burrows in the Southern Alps.

The Canterbury Botanical Society has been the beneficiary of his friendliness, fairness, teaching skills, and writing. With the Society's Journal Issue No. 2 in 1969 he began a succession of papers, describing the flora of Lake Ellesmere (Te Waihora), its margins, and the spit. There followed Castle Hill, Upper Rakaia, Upper Rangitata, Mackenzie Basin, and Arthur's Pass Park. Subsequent contributions included botanical finds, plant growth, seed dispersal and germination, and recently threatened places like Mt Cass ridge and the Upper Hurunui. In 1986 Colin published an introduction to the botany of Arthur's Pass National Park with a checklist of vascular plants in the *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 24: 9-68. It was this that inspired the Society to issue an updated checklist with additions for the Park as Journal Issue No. 40 2006-2007.

As the pressure came off his teaching at the Botany Department, University of Canterbury, Colin became editor of our Journal from 1993 to 1998. He was able to encourage even recalcitrant botanists to contribute, to the benefit of all. In 1996 Colin masterminded a symposium to mark the 150th anniversary

of EFL Raoul (surgeon with the French ships *Aube* and *Allier*) botanising on Banks Peninsula. The eleven papers presented formed a well-received Special Publication of the Society. In 2001 Colin was awarded the Society's Senior Bledisloe Trophy.

Colin influenced the ways of the Society as Vice President from 1993 to 1996, and as a member of the programme committee. The field camps he led were a delight: routes, plant highlights, bunks, and food were all taken care of. I remember particularly Mt Cook, Nydia Bay (Pelorus Sound), and Onekaka (Golden Bay). In the spring of 2011 he led a group of members to the best sites on Otamahua/Quail Island for a survey of mosses there. The restoration of Otamahua vegetation (for the island's Ecological Restoration Trust) was a project at which he worked very hard planning and leading planting through the vagaries of the seasons. This work led to the award of the Loder Cup to Colin.

The studies of moa gizzards from Pyramid Valley Swamp and from the National and Canterbury Museums in 1980 were among the first to describe the moa diet, especially of tough twigs of divaricating shrubs, and seeds. Recently Colin took up again the breeding and taxonomy of *Pimelea*, which had been the subject of his MSc thesis in 1958. Five papers published in the *New Zealand Journal of Botany* provide answers and propositions for all the botanical societies. A long-running study was experimental work on the germination behaviour of native seeds for which the focus was Ahuriri Bush on the western Port Hills. He shared his methods with us on a field trip.

Colin's books are about two of his research subjects. *Processes of Vegetation Change* (1990) explains plant succession to the general botanical reader using examples from North America and New Zealand in particular. *Julius Haast in the Southern Alps* (2005) reviews Haast's contribution to topographical and geological mapping from 1861 to 1878. Other chapters discuss the glacial record of the Southern Alps from the beginning of the Ice Age. Both books are abundantly illustrated, using sources not generally available.

Vivienne, herself a zoologist, understood how important it was to Colin to be so much in the field and in his book-lined study writing, which contributed to his rich output. The Canterbury Botanical Society was privileged to share so much of his time.

References

Kelly D 1994. Special Section – The Burrows Symposium – Introduction. Paper presented at a symposium held at University of Canterbury on 11 October 1993 to mark the retirement of Colin Burrows. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 32: 345 – 347.

Kelly D 2014. Colin Burrows (1931–2014). *New Zealand Ecological Society Newsletter* No. 147: 2.