

Dr Andrew Thomson

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Dr Andrew Thomson (Figure 1) was a leader in the research of New Zealand's scientific history, particularly that of the botanical era 1900-1934. He was dedicated and meticulous in his research, publishing many valuable articles. A stickler for detail, he had an ability to collate the invaluable information he gained through his endless correspondence with Cockayne-related contacts throughout New Zealand and overseas.

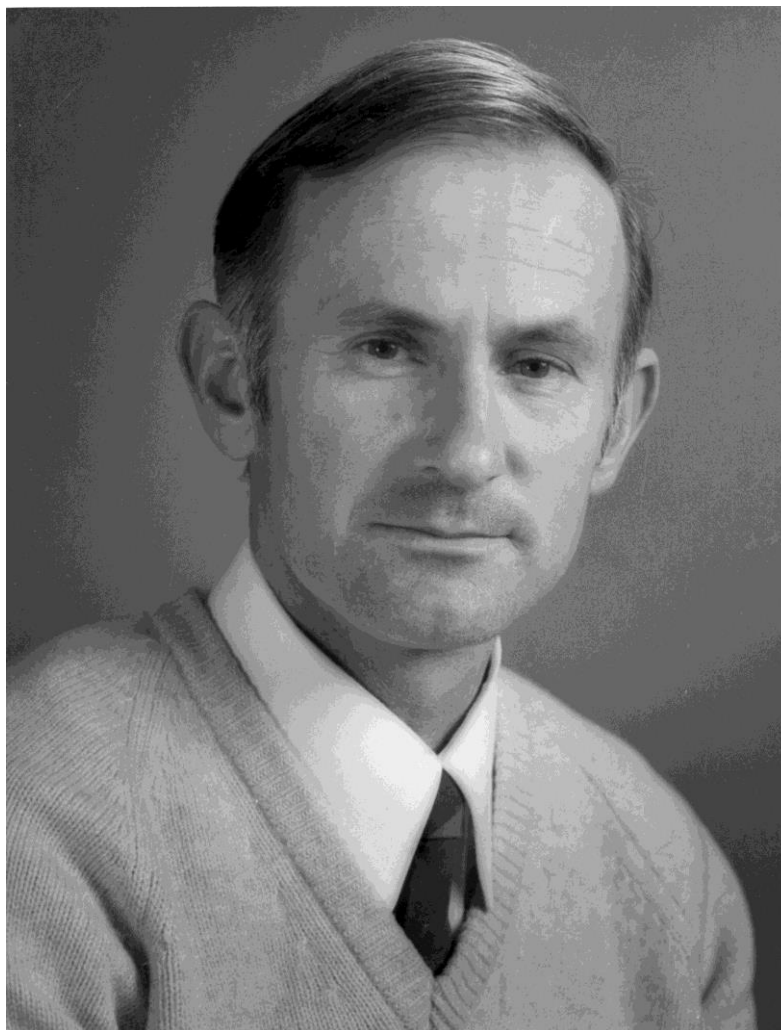


Figure 1. Dr Andrew Thomson

Andy joined the Botany Division of the DSIR, Lincoln in 1971. He initially helped with editing the *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, and in 1974 he founded and edited the *Botany Division Newsletter*, which was an informal record for staff communication.

As Andy's research into botanical history grew, so did his interest into the person who would become the central figure of this work, Leonard Cockayne. Andy was greatly influenced by Dr Eric Godley. Eric edited a 4th edition of Cockayne's *New Zealand plants and their story* in 1967. This resulted in a renewed interest in the work of Cockayne, and Andy was "sold"! With much encouragement and advice from Eric, Andy embarked on his extensive research into the life of Leonard Cockayne. This culminated with *A bibliography of the work of Leonard Cockayne* published in the *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, Volume 20, 1982. The following year, 1983, Andy published *The life and correspondence of Leonard Cockayne*. Prior to this, the most complete overall account of Cockayne's work had been given by Dr Lucy Moore for the 1965 Cockayne Memorial Lecture. Before that was the official obituary for Cockayne written by Sir Arthur W Hill and published in 1934 in the *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew)* No. 8, pp. 313-317.

It is to Andy that we owe much gratitude for giving us a richer understanding of Leonard Cockayne. In the years leading up to his publications on Cockayne, Andy shared his mounting accumulation of carefully researched stories through numerous articles. They varied in length, and were included in the *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, *New Zealand Botanical Society Newsletter* and the *Botany Division Newsletter*. In 1982, Dr Rolf E Du Rietz of the Center for Bibliographical Studies, Uppsala, Sweden wrote to Andy congratulating him on his Cockayne bibliography, commending the:

... painstaking work you have carried out with your bibliography of Leonard Cockayne! I am one of those who know something about the drudgery of this kind of work, but I also know that this has been truly a labour of love.

In the *Botany Division Newsletter* No. 114 30 June 1987, Andy himself stated in reference to his bibliography on Lucy Moore:

A scientist's bibliography should include all published items irrespective of their size or apparent significance or the venue. An incomplete or selected bibliography is deficient. This explains my persistence with the recording of additions to Lucy's bibliography as new items are found and the posthumous publications come to hand.

Andy retired from the Botany Division in 1990. In the same year he founded the independent Centre for Studies on New Zealand Science History from his home in Cashmere. In this he was assisted by his equally dedicated wife Diane who acted as administration officer. He answered queries on all aspects of our science history not only botany, and continued to collect historical material. His extensive accounts of New Zealand women in science remain unpublished. Andy wrote Leonard Cockayne's entry for the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography – Te Ara*, which was first published in 1996.

Eric wrote Andy's obituary for the *New Zealand Botanical Society Newsletter* No. 69 September 2002. He concluded with:

And this brings up the whole question of our botanical archives. Could the New Zealand Botanical Society organise an Andy Thomson Workshop devoted to finding out who has what, and publish the results as was done for our bryophyte collections in the NZJ Botany in 1971. It would keep fresh the vision shown by a staunch friend and a generous helper.

Andy and Diane enjoyed weekly Sunday strolls around Hagley Park. In the *Botany Division Newsletter* No. 80 September 1982 he wrote:

When I visit the Woodland area of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens at this time of the year, I remember Leonard Cockayne and Mr James Anderson McPherson ('Jimmy Mac'). One of the most precious items in my collection of Cockayne manuscripts is a copy of 33 pp. text of his lecture 'The Daffodil' given to the Canterbury Philosophical Institute on 22 September 1897.

An observation on another stroll prompted Andy to write a letter to the mayor of Christchurch, Gary Moore, in 2002. He made note of some new native plantings in a plot at the Armagh Street entrance to Hagley Park. The reason for the letter was:

We also note the gates which commemorate Adam Frederick John Mickle M.D. (1847-1935). Though I know little about Dr Mickle's contributions to the city, I do know he was famed botanist Leonard Cockayne's physician when Dr Cockayne was living in Christchurch....

Andy went on to explain to the Mayor just who Leonard Cockayne was. He concluded with:

My wife and I have been disappointed to note the dilapidated state of the metal memorial gates. May we suggest that the gates could be cleaned and painted. This would help to enhance this important entrance to Hagley Park to accompany the small upgraded bed of native plants. My wife and I would be willing to make a donation to the cost of painting the gates....

Andy and Diane kept their pledge and donated a considerable sum of money for this work to be carried out.

One of the Botanic Gardens staff remembers with fondness his Sunday encounters with Andrew and Diane and of the many conversations where Andy would share his knowledge of Cockayne.

In 2004 Diane approached me to offer the Botanic Gardens library a substantial set of Cockayne reprints that Andy had gathered. These had been neatly tied together in sets for the years 1891-1934 amounting to 268 reprints. In addition to

this was a separate collection of reports Cockayne had written for the New Zealand Institute, the Canterbury A and P Association's Journal, Department of Lands reports, Department of Forestry reports, Royal Commission, New Zealand Geological Survey reports, ecological reports, Cawthron Institute of Scientific Research published lectures, New Zealand Journal of Science and Technology, and the *Lyttelton Times* newspaper.

Diane also donated Andy's prized framed copy of Leonard Cockayne's portrait, which he had special permission to reproduce from the original work painted by Sister Mary Lawrence. Along with this came many reprinted photos of Cockayne. Among these are prints from a photo album presented to Cockayne by Charles Foweraker at Christmas 1915. The photos were taken by Foweraker, a Canterbury College lecturer of botany and forestry. They were given as memories of many happy field trips made by the College's staff and students to their Mountain Biological Station at Cass in 1915. These of course feature Leonard Cockayne, whom even his friend and pupil Charles Foweraker could not get to look at the camera!

Leonard Cockayne was a member of the Christchurch Domains Board until his departure to Wellington. The Domains Board managed the Botanic Gardens and Hagley Park. It seems fitting for the mentioned gifts (albeit copies) Andy had painstakingly gathered on Cockayne to be given to the Christchurch Botanic Gardens library. Leonard's portrait hangs proudly in the library and reminds us of the Cockayne Memorial Garden, opened in 1938, which remains the Gardens only living memorial (Figure 2, page 77).



Figure 2. Dr E J Godley and Sir Otto Frankel FRS (1900-1998) photographed on 13 December 1979 beside the plaque marking the Christchurch Botanic Gardens' Cockayne Memorial Garden. Dr Godley, formerly Director of DSIR Botany Division, Lincoln helped reawaken interest in the life and work of Leonard Cockayne. Sir Otto Frankel was a noted geneticist and science administrator, and was Director of DSIR Crop Research Division, Lincoln before moving to Australia to become Chief of the CSIRO Division of Plant Industry. Sir Otto originally suggested the concept of the Memorial Garden. Species of the genus *Hebe* [now *Veronica*] are shown in the background. This important genus was studied by both Cockayne and Frankel and the latter established the original arrangement of the *Hebe* plants in the Memorial Garden. (Photo: A D Thomson).