

# Wellington Botanical Society

## overnight field trips; an evolving phenomenon

*Sheena Hudson<sup>1</sup>*

### INTRODUCTION

This article is the result of a conversation at the 2015 Wellington Botanical Society ('BotSoc') summer field trip based at St Arnaud in Nelson Lakes National Park. At this field trip, the whole of a backpackers' lodge was taken over and each evening local caterers arrived with a splendid two course meal. One evening, at dinner, I remarked how different it all was from my first BotSoc field trip twenty-two years ago. This led to an amazing and delightful time of reminiscing about many different places and experiences individuals had while on BotSoc field trips. Some of those present thought perhaps these stories should be documented; I volunteered and it has been a pleasure reading of the many field trips and listening to some long time members' stories of field trips all over New Zealand.

### METHODS

I gathered primary data relating to field trip destinations, participants and numbers attending from BotSoc Newsletters and Bulletins, and also had access to Tony Druce's 'Trip book' which contains trip reports and members attending going back to the first overnight field trips. From these I drew up a list of thirty-three potential participants to contact. These were selected from current and past members of Wellington BotSoc. For ease of access I prioritised those who were living in the Wellington region. Some potential participants outside the region were willing to answer questions using email. The final number of participants was ten interviewed face to face and a further four by email. Those interviewed had been on field trips spanning six decades.

### Interview schedule and process

I used a semi-structured interview with subsidiary prompts which ensured participants were given the opportunity to describe trips, thoughts on what took them back again and again, and the changes that they saw in time.

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The anonymous interviews took place at venues chosen by the participants who also gave permission to record the interviews.

### **Data analysis**

The factual data relating to field trip details were compiled. Notes were made from the recorded interviews and using the prompted questions as a priori codes, recurring themes were noted. Further themes were also determined.

## **RESULTS**

The first overnight field trip was in 1956 at Easter and this pattern of an Easter trip continued until 1962 when a Wellington Anniversary Weekend trip was also introduced. These were the two main overnight field trips until the December/January holiday in 1974/5 when a special Chatham Islands field trip was planned. It had to be abandoned and instead a trip to the northern Ruahines became the first of forty such ‘Christmas’ trips. It is very clear from the detailed notes in Tony Druce’s trip book that he was the inspiration and planner behind many of these trips between 1956 and 1994. Since then, many different members have taken on the responsibility of planning and leading the trips.

### **Who went on the field trips and why did they start?**

As I read through Tony’s trip book I was fascinated by the pattern of trip participants. In the 1950s until the early 1980s, apart from Tony and his family, there were ten different family groups who regularly attended through this period. None of these were professional botanists although many had related work activities. In addition there were couples and singles some of whom were professional botanists. The age range was from a few months old to eighty plus.

When I asked participants why they first went on BotSoc overnight trips, I had many different answers. Some had done some botany:

*I started as a student because we had to collect specimens for a herbarium...then I kept going.*

*There were wonderful professional botanists and botanical artists on the trips.*

*I first went because they were going somewhere I wanted to see...I had done some WEA [Workers’ Educational Association] classes in botany. It was an easy 20 minute walk, a big fire. I enjoyed it and the people and made some good friends.*

Many started because of the opportunity to get into remote places:

*I got into so many parts of New Zealand I’d never otherwise get to...getting up on those mountains.*

*I particularly love getting above the bushline and enjoying the views and the alpine plants that thrive in such harsh conditions.*

*A whole new world was opened up to me. I had never been a trumper and here was an opportunity to get into the mountains and see and learn about amazing things in amazing scenery...I have never forgotten the celmisias and scree plants I saw for the first time on those early trips. I went to places I never would have had the chance to get to if I hadn't gone with BotSoc; the plants were a huge part of it.*

Others just loved having a holiday with a difference:

*It was a holiday but we learnt a lot!*

*People kept coming and I enjoyed it. Botany was good; it was completely away from working in an office.*

*I was a late starter, and joined WBS [Wellington Botanical Society] as a country member in 1991 when I was in my mid-fifties. My school secretarial work prevented me from joining tramping club trips to the South Island, which took place in February (a hectic time in the new school year), and my friend Audrey Eagle, a long-time WBS member, suggested I join WBS as its summer trips were in the New Year, went to interesting places, allowed plenty of time to look and take photos—and non-botanists were welcome. So I did! I was hooked!*

*As a trumper and non-social person my social life was most enjoyably done in the bush with a bunch of people on the same wavelength...and focused on plants.*

Family members have very happy memories about joining:

*I was a solo Mum and got invited by another family who went. I wasn't a botanist... but that came and I continued on my own after the children stopped coming. They made things happen...with generosity and tolerance. Now it's like a language when I'm on the tops...what is this? My Latin even comes back for botanical names. Knowing botany, it gives you more intimacy with the bush.*

*I got involved in 1961...and now BotSoc trips seem to have been forever.*

### **Where they went, how they got there**

In the earlier years there was an emphasis on trips to north-west South Island and to the central North Island ranges. In later years, particularly, the longer Christmas trips have been based at almost every corner of New Zealand in both North and South Islands from Cape Reinga to Stewart Island and Taranaki to Hawke's Bay. A late November/early December 'shake-down' trip, often to the Wairarapa, became customary for many years. This was time to get out the tents, sleeping bags and other gear ready for the bigger trips.



Figure 1. Up on the tops. From left: Tony Druce, Bill Malcolm, Darea Sherratt. Photo by Geoff Rogers.



Figure 2. Camp fire, Mount Owen. From left: Helen Druce, ?, Geoff Rogers, ?, Stan Reid, ?, ?, Christine Whiteford, Ted Abraham, Elsie Gibbons. Photo: Rona Spencer.



Figure 3. Rocky Hills. Standing at back, from left: Ursula White, Barbara Clark, Shelagh Leary, Joyce McDiarmid, ?Gordon Leary. Sitting/crouching at front, from left: Ted Abraham, ?, Rodney Lewington, Ted Williams, Elsie Gibbons, Marjorie Harrison, Darea Sherratt. Photo: Tony Druce.

For many years and well into the 1990s, the field trips had a tented base camp but since then field trips have often been based at shearers' quarters, lodges or farm buildings. Camping is usually still an option near the building.

On some of the early trips the Society hired a truck or bus to transport participants to the road end. From there folk had to carry their own gear to the base camp. But it seems a custom also developed of using a helicopter to ferry provisions and communal gear to the remoter campsites with the participants left to carry tents and personal gear. As private cars became more common, members took their own vehicles, often car-pooling to places with road access.

Participants' memories of getting there reflect the era in which they went:

### **Early trips**

*We sometimes went in a truck...one time we stopped off in the middle of the Desert Road and had to walk all day with packs to get to this beautiful camp spot at Lake Rotopounamu... and at night we had heavy frosts there. One trip to Mt. Owen we were told not to have more than a certain amount in weight to be helicoptered to the camp site.*

*We went by ferry, plane, chartered bus, van and car. In the North Island...mainly by car. T's van had wicker seats in the back and nine people and all the food could get packed in there sometimes.*

*We used some vans and cars and then we tramped originally with Mountain Mules and Trapper Nelson packs.*

*We piled everything on the roof of the car...tied it on...it was before those bungy things.*

*We used coaches in the South Island...On one occasion we took the ferry across and got the coach very late at night. We were supposed to fly to Nelson and get the coach to the Cobb but the flight was cancelled and I had to go down to book the ferry and get the dollars back out of Air NZ. We got in late and the coach had to come from Nelson to Picton then to the Cobb valley. He didn't go to the end and stopped and we took over a building for the night. T was already at the other end with all the provisions so one of the fit young fellows had to run all the way to the end and bring breakfast back for us. The coach driver wouldn't go any further...he had chipped the bus on the way up the bends.*

*Sometimes we used a helicopter. It cost about \$400.00.*

*On my first trip in 1992 all the food and camp gear got helicoptered in and we hiked for many hours on to our camp on the tops.*

### **Numbers on trips**

The numbers on trips were small to start with. On the Anniversary Weekend trips they were usually in the twenties until a high peak in 1978 at Springs Junction with 80 participants. Numbers reduced slowly through the



years, still reaching the twenties in the 1990s, but latterly so few that there is no longer an Anniversary Weekend field trip.

A similar pattern occurred with the longer Easter weekend trips. Numbers rose to the thirties until they peaked in 1977 at 59 when the trip was to the south Kaimanawa Range. It is noted in the records that few made it to the Easter trip to Arthur's Pass in 1968 because of the Wahine storm. Easter trips are still run but numbers are around 15 and in 2014 the planned trip was cancelled because of lack of participants.

For many years the Christmas trips used to start on the 27th December and run to the 7th January but in later years the timing moved to mid-January as accommodation was easier to book at this time. Numbers for the Christmas trips have always been higher; in the early years in the forties and fifties but latterly in the thirties.

### **Setting up and camp activities**

In the days when the base camp was at a remote spot, setting up camp was quite a performance; toilets and hygiene were often mentioned by participants:

*One of the first jobs when we got to a camp was the setting up of the long drop, some distance away.*

*Setting up camp was a business; we had a trench or pit for a toilet and a screen for some privacy. We left the toilet roll outside to let others know it was empty.*

*We had a pit toilet dug and hygiene was important with dish washing and rinsing.*

*A cooking tent, scrim-surrounded temporary pit toilets, half-drum on frames for the traditional three-stage dish-washing procedure, lots of little tents dotted around, and the river or little containers of river water for personal washing.*

Tents and cooking were also important parts of the camp:

*We always camped and had to carry our own tents in unless we were lucky and they got taken on the helicopter.*

*They were usually for 7 days often with an extra  $\frac{3}{4}$  day walk at the end.*

*Early camps always had open fires with a billy going for tea. But later we had gas stoves. We had great songsters in the early days.*

*For cooking you had to put yourself on a roster...just as we still do.*

*The Jubilee trip up north had 83 people and we had 16 pint billies on billy hooks...it was a monster task.*

*The camps were great. You carried your own gear, kids too. And there was the wonderful generosity of the BotSoc. They would help me with my stuff and I gradually improved my gear. T was wonderful with the kids and my kids adored him and H.*

Camp fires and sing-songs were mentioned too:

*Rowdy singing of songs completed the post-evening meal cuppa (Bournvita also*

available). These eventually coalesced into the BotSoc Songbook, a compendium of old English folk songs, sea shanties, tramping club songs, Aussie ballads and naughty but nice ditties among them. Added to the repertoire later were the ballads of Peter Cape and other kiwi songs such as "The Coleridge Run", "The Phosphate Fliers", songs of the goldfields and popular waiata like "Pokarekare Ana", the words for which remain embedded in memory.



Figure 4. Camp fire songs. From left: ?, Stan Reid, ?, Christine Whiteford, Ted Abraham, Elsie Gibbons, Murray Vincent. Photo: Rona Spencer.

## Food stories

*We used to collect the groceries on the way; for example at Murchison or Kaikoura; things had to keep for 10 days...so things like dahl, tinned meat and fish and always coleslaw made of cabbage and carrots. And of course porridge for breakfast as well as something cooked; and fillings for lunches were much the same as they are today but usually we had to take our own bread, butter, scroggin and biscuits.*

*I remember some rituals around food. The cooking was shared by everybody, as per carefully prepared lists, although really important tasks, such as making porridge, were entrusted only to a privileged few. TW's contribution in this area in later years was outstanding. Billy tea was another key component of any BotSoc day. Even in the foulest weather a fire was always provided at lunch time. Great effort was taken to obtain and maintain a small supply of dry wood. Since most early trips were under canvas, the ability to light a fire in the rain and wind was essential and a skill highly prized.*

*T planned all the food and got it down to a fine art but on some trips towards the end there were problems...once on the Wanganui Saddle at meal time we discovered*

*the mince had become flyblown and someone said 'Don't worry just put in more rice, people will never notice.'*



Figure 5. Kaimanawa Ranges. Barbara Polly, Darea Sherratt, Maggy Wassilieff, Elsie Gibbons, Geoff Rogers, Susan Timmins. Photo: Rodney Lewington.

*As well as porridge there was always a fry up of sausages or some such and you made your own lunch from communal material.*

*Usually we had coleslaw made from cabbage and carrot, and tinned food...instant pudding, now we often have pot luck dinners.*

*We had dehy, always cooked on an open fire and always a wonderful atmosphere around the fire.*

*The food was great; hearty, tinned stuff was fine. Hot chocolate on cold days. My kids loved it, one particularly.*

*We had a standard menu of tinned fish, tongue, corned beef then repeat; dried potatoes, rice, macaroni and try and mix them up a bit. We had dried apricots, apples, instant pud and custard. Tinned sardines. At some later time you had to take your own bread or Ryvita. Breakfast was always porridge and then bacon and beans, dried egg and bacon and sausages on the first day and dry bacon that we could slice. We had a system for doing breakfast with the billies.*

*The Jubilee trip we had 83 people to feed and we got 4 gas stoves to help and from then on we used them. As attitudes to fires in the bush changed, we did too.*

*Meals were "cooks up at 5.30 am, for breakfast at 6.15" (porridge—2 kg rolled oats, plus eggs and something else hot), cooked on portable gas rings, then a great choice of ingredients put out for lunch-making. Evening meals tended to be based on tinned meat, coleslaw and chickpeas when it was impracticable to get fresh supplies,*



*followed by canned fruit and muesli/milk (powder)/custard. Unexpected treats such as New Year wine and cake and homemade gooseberry shortcake went down very well.*

### **What the children thought**

Apart from the adults botanising, socialising, tramping, cooking and singing songs, in the early years children played. Some of the child participants, now adults, had detailed memories of the summer trips. Some were particularly descriptive:

*I loved that whole thing being supported by knowledgeable warm people. I remember TW in the morning yelling "pooooorrrrrrr", cooking over open fires, the smell of the air at night in the bush with morepork hooting...making up stories about the gnomes and fairies, fording rivers with arms linked, finding small plants like orchids by the side of the path, aciphyllas up on the tops among the tussock and memorising the name by thinking of asses full of phyllas, climbing the mountains with heavy packs, coming in sight of the hut at last and taking off the pack and feeling all light and bouncy...wekas sneaking up... and keas swooping overhead with flashes of red under their wings, the smell of beech forest after rain...the golden red swishing mass of tall tussock with green moss and silvery lichen-covered rocks...alpine tarns surrounded by natural gardens. It was a hugely precious and important thing in my world and I will be eternally grateful for it all!!!*

*When I was very little I remember going in a sleeping truck and it was super exciting...then we walked and we had to carry our little packs. T always made a fire. We loved some of the BotSoc characters: we loved 'Horsehair', 'Candy'...he always wore candy striped shorts. T's Easter egg hunt was such great fun. The eggs were hidden all around so it was a real challenge to find them but all the kids loved it.*

*One event stands out; we had tramped all day along the Robert Ridge in Nelson Lakes and reached Lake Angelus, lying serene before us across a broad grassy slope. Stripping off, we ran down and dived in to be greeted by a crinkle-crinkle as we broke the thin and invisible layer of ice floating on the lake surface. Momentum had propelled us maybe 10–15 metres out and surprise and terror returned us to shore almost as fast. Another favoured non-plant activity was running down scree as fast as possible. The series of trips to north-west Nelson remain a highlight of my BotSoc days. We built a raft from discarded drums and paddled it across Lake Sylvester; we had a best-forgotten interaction with several idle caterpillar tractors on the road to Lake Cobb. Years later we would all return to the Cobb Valley to build Fenella Hut and return again whenever possible to a special part of New Zealand for us all.*

Another believed the experiences influenced their choice of career:

*I remember Dr. M; we would help her collect berries...the archetype of BotSoc women, strong, hardworking, gentle, friendly, knowledgeable about a vast range of topics and approachable from a child's perspective. I remember being impressed with how much she knew about seaweeds too! I thought she was wonderful. Although I never contemplated being a botanist as I could never remember a plant's name from one trip to the next, L and T together cemented my early determination to be a scientist of some sort.*

And some had humorous memories:

*It is a slight exaggeration to say that I could recognise backsides as easily as faces but people did spend an inordinate amount of time on their knees with their faces to the ground.*



Figure 6. Getting up close in the Urewera National Park. Mick Parsons. Photo: Sheena Hudson.

*And one of New Zealand's pioneering women climbers. She did things her way, such as the liberal use of bright blue eye shadow, otherwise unheard of in our company.*

*When I earlier mentioned canvas, I meant canvas tents and not posh nylon accommodations with floors. Early BotSoc trips had unbelievably uncomfortable packs, heavy Macintoshes, sou'westers, itchy woollens, hobnail boots and horrible freeze-dried meat and worse. Carbide lamps, home-made sleeping bags; but the scroggin was pretty damn good.*

Some remembered being naughty too:

*We got into trouble for tying tussocks to trip people up...and firing bidibids at people.*

*We had sword fights with Spaniards' heads and we threw Maori onion seeds into the fire and we did get into trouble for that.*

*Once we did a terrible thing; we raided a hut because we didn't like the people who were in it. It was serious and we never did anything like it again. I remember being shocked at what we did.*

*One of my daughters says she was so amazed that 'such old people would be so fit and they camped all the time' and she learned that life doesn't need to stop when you are older.*

### Adults' attitudes to children

With so many children attending in the earlier years, I was interested when in an early interview a participant commented on that experience. I then asked the question of all the participants. There were varying answers. Most thought it was just fine to have the children along. Parents thought it fine:



Figure 7. Wet feet. From left: Neill Simpson, Rodney Lewington. Photo: Barbara Simpson.

*T was very encompassing of children...I never needed to worry about the boys, if they got out of sight I knew other people looked about for them...the boys became confident in the outdoors and still are.*

*T was marvellous with kids and kept them entertained...one trip to Fenella there were about 20 and the weather changed and southerly fronts kept coming funnelling down the gorge. Everything got soaked, sleeping bags, tents and some of the kids got quite distressed and potentially hypothermic while their parents carried them out. Then T made a big fire and they got warm in no time.*

*It influenced her life...she is a mega gardener. They played with other kids. It was an adventure. We would never have got there on our own. There was structure to get to places. They learnt heaps. I think some of the older people just tolerated us...they didn't really like us to be there but they were too nice to be critical.*

*I took my son. He was no problem. We shared a pup tent. There were quite a lot of kids and they played. You'd get them interested and they'd chant the names of mosses. He grew out of it though.*

*T thought people should be responsible for themselves. So low key responsibility on the whole. There was always someone you could look to who would pick up the child.*

Other adults too were fine:

*Kids did things... not botany. It started off as a family holiday for people with kids some of whose parents were botanists.*

Sometimes though, children's activities got too much:

*Having the children there could be very trying as sometimes when they misbehaved and played up and their parent would sit back and expect others to look after them... it was worrying and annoying.*

*Families went and I remember some teens played with bows and arrows. People complained because they weren't there for botany and made a noise.*

*I got really angry once. Some children were on a bluff and they were pulling out rock daisies and throwing them around. I spoke up that time. Another time a game of Dungeons and Dragons began to dominate the shelters so we adults took over. But mostly they were a joy and pretty thoughtful.*

### Special places

Some participants talked about special places they had been on BotSoc trips:

*Great Barrier Island...and not where the tourists went.*

*BotSoc got permission to go places and we were always careful so we could go back again.*

*Finding lots of mistletoe in a valley near Omarama.*



Figure 8. Great Barrier Island. From left: Bryan Halliday, Ian Goodwin. Photo: Sheena Hudson.



*Mt. Hikurangi, East Cape; where at midnight we saw a display of the aurora australis.*

*Each trip had something special and Kahurangi National Park is special...they took me into that area.*

### **Tricky times**

When asked if there had been any less happy or eventful times, participants had a variety of memories. Some were about nearly getting lost:

*I remember on Mt. Peel we had to do some sidling above scree that I didn't like too much. And one of the adults taught the boys to navigate our way home...I remember one member broke her arm and had to be carried out....Sometimes I just took off and we followed...we seemed to not get lost but it was hard to keep us together.*

*I (almost) bit off more than I could chew on the Ruahine Anniversary Weekend trip that year... a long walk in, helped by the tents and other gear being helicoptered in, but hindered by rain, and even further going back by a different "splendid" route and track that proved even longer. I suffered the ignominy of having part of my pack contents offloaded and added to the burden of one of the stronger and fitter members of the party, to enable me to make it back, which we did, just before dark. Needless to say, I didn't gain much botanically on that trip, but the whole experience is one I'll never forget. The other times that haven't been so good, have been when I've found myself on my own, caught between two groups in new, untracked territory, when, impatient at the intensive botanising of a group, I've wandered on, by which time those in front are out of sight. Which way did they go? It almost happened one time when we had a boat to catch back. I only just made it, and when I mentioned it back at camp I was told (half-jokingly) that it was quite possible that a member of the group wouldn't be missed until he or she was rostered for dinner duty, which could be several days hence! It seems a miracle that no one, to my knowledge, seems to have become seriously lost.*

*There were times when someone went off overnight and we worried until they came back in the morning.*

Other tales were about accidents, near accidents or bad weather:

*Often there were three doctors on the trips, and once when a child fell out of a tree they got stitched up on the spot; another got pain relief injected after a broken leg; and once we had to have 'foot inspection' to see how our feet were for blisters.*

*One trip I was sort of the leader and I ended up being put off because two people nearly died on the trip...one got lost and the other had a medical condition that made it very difficult to cope with the cold.*

*On the way to Pirongia at Appletree Road near Waitomo one of the members fell into the dunny; the floor just gave way. We washed everything down with porridge water and then built a new dunny.*

*Someone once gashed their leg badly but it got all stitched up. And sadly we lost a member to a heart attack on the Lewis Pass trip.*

*On the Saw Cut Gorge trip the children had to be carried as the water rose...Once a kid fell out of a tree.*



*I remember one trip when we got stuck in our tents for two days because of snow; some tents collapsed and we had to find somewhere else.*



Figure 9. West coast. From left: Barbara Mitcalfe, Chris Horne. Photo: Rodney Lewington.

*On the West Coast trip we had very heavy rain, the water supply got polluted and we had a diarrhoea outbreak.*

*On a Mt. Peel trip we had 16–20 in the party and were climbing to the summit. The weather was poor and we had meant to camp but decided to try the 4 bunk hut! We made extra layers and all the boots and packs went under the bunks and we managed very well until after dark four or five teenagers arrived in tee-shirts who were very hungry and cold. So we fed them too. Talk about sardines!*

*I think the summer of 1982 we had floods and we had to persuade the coach driver to cross a stream.*

*One older member got hit with a stone and cut her head and the doctor in the group stitched her up after dinner! Someone broke their ankle and had to be carried out on a stretcher.*

### **Changes over time**

Since this project was looking at the history of the BotSoc overnight field trips, I was curious as to how long-time participants saw changes through the years. Numbers and fewer overnight field trips were mentioned frequently:

Slightly smaller number of participants.

*The Christmas numbers seem to stay steady but the Easter and other trips have got low; one Easter one even had to be cancelled for lack of numbers.*

*We used to have a 'shake down' weekend in December to get the gear all sorted for the next trips. During the summer we'd have the Christmas one, Wellington Anniversary Weekend and then Easter.*

Participants noted the lack of young people, the aging of the participants and no longer a family experience:

*There are fewer families, and young people are not such enthusiastic joiners.*

*Students used to come sometimes when they were studying taxonomy but they dropped off. After a trip to Nepal quite a few more people joined.*

*Why not young people? Taxonomy is no longer taught, it is incidental with DNA now. Students no longer have to collect for a herbarium, which used to bring some young people.*

*As families grew up the children stopped coming. It was more regimental for a while; with a larger group we had to have a tail ender sometimes. We used to go for very long days, even until dark. Days are shorter now.*

*It used to be a family trip with botany now it is botany with some socialising. We'd never take wine...and now we do!*

*Tending to be older in years (seldom children now), but pleasing to see younger, professional botanists willing to share their knowledge as well as learn from the experiences of others.*

*People getting older; it is really not a regenerating club.*

*Other BotSocs have declined...ours may too. We have changed.*

Perhaps because of the age of participants there have been other changes:

*Trends away from camping and carrying, to using base camps, motor camps, shearers' quarters and lodges...still pleasing but not the same atmosphere as camping.*

*They started to do slightly less adventurous trips and did more with a building.*

*Slowly got the car to camps and getting people to not have to cook an evening meal but just breakfast and lunch.*

*Lots of changes to gear and equipment; waterproofing and not being allowed to light fires.*

*Sometimes one or two evening talks/presentations were offered on summer trips and these don't seem to happen much now. Perhaps the venues haven't been suitable, or people are too busy doing their own thing, or too tired...?*

*Morning, lunch, and afternoon tea boil-ups ceased around the time that T stopped taking field trips, which also coincided with increasing DOC restrictions on fires in National Parks.*

*More 4WD vehicles available to shuttle people to the bushline or other inaccessible places, saving time and energy, and widening their horizons.*

Going back as an adult wasn't quite the same for two of the children:

*I went back many years later and I noted how things had changed; they'd got huge, a little crowded, I couldn't relate to it; the organisation of the food, management, everything was on a large scale. I came one time with my son. I am more interested in geology now.*

*One of the children came back as an adult but she felt out of place as everyone seemed old and I suppose she had grown up.*

## DISCUSSION

Through the past almost sixty years, Wellington Botanical Society overnight field trips have brought botany, and pleasure, to many people. However, like many outdoor clubs in New Zealand, the BotSoc has an ageing membership; bowling clubs close, tramping clubs either reinvent themselves or decline. Many of those still in existence have ageing members. There have been various reasons posited for this: the lack of a need for 'community' such as is found in clubs. Instead young people go on 'events' or take part in more adrenalin-involved activities such as mountain-biking; young people are too busy to join clubs and they are in Facebook or Twitter instead. Families do other things.

Certainly, young people and families are not joining the Wellington BotSoc to the same extent. Some older people are joining and the activities on field trips now reflect the age. Will the overnight field trips survive? Will the club need to reinvent itself for them to survive? Perhaps a survey of university students or young professionals working in the field would be the next step to finding out?

As a present ageing member, one participant's comment rings true:

*Long may Wellington Botanical Society's summer field trips be a highlight of my year!*

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