

## Martin Holdsworth

When the Botanical Society of Otago was being formed, Martin Holdsworth commented: "I thought that sort of thing went out with country parsons in elastic-sided boots". However, even if Martin thought little of the Botanical Society, many of its members thought a lot of him. [Editor]

### Obituary

Martin Holdsworth was a botanist of the old school, and had a very wide knowledge of the plant kingdom in all its aspects.

He lectured for many years in the Botany Department, Otago University. Most well-known as a physiologist, he also knew the angiosperm families well, and had an immense knowledge of morphology. He had a keen interest in ecology, and made valuable collections, notably from east Otago and Stewart Island.



Dr Holdsworth was stimulated by a great curiosity about all phases of plant growth and differentiation, but despite the depth of his knowledge he remained totally devoid of pomp, and was always interested in discussing any aspect of botany. He was basically an empiricist, and relished the simple experiment which probed the principles of plant physiology. This characteristically English side of his approach was balanced by a radical scepticism more typical of the French, and his lectures contained many valuable lessons in the more irrational sides of science. The institutional suppression of heterodoxy and the role of psychological and personal factors in botanical research were favourite themes. His lectures contained penetrating analyses of the historical development of physiology, which included many amusing anecd-

dotes. His incisive interpretations of current research were based on close readings of the classic German physiologists, and the realisation that most modern accounts involve reincarnations of a few pivotal ideas introduced in the first part of this Century.

Dr Holdsworth's time in Ghana also greatly influenced his views, and his lectures were enlivened with constant references to the behaviour of exotic plants, such as mango and cocoa. He had a rare understanding of tropical phenomena such as the double rainy season and "irregular" phenology, and he exploited this valuable knowledge in framing general principles as well as in critiques of accepted views.

M.J. Heads.

## Other meetings

### Fungal Foray

There will be a Fungal Foray at Boyle River Lodge, Lewis Pass, May 10-13. The cost is \$10+ per person-night. Limited to 30 persons. Contact Phillipa Horn, Plant Science Dept, Lincoln College, Canterbury.

### Dunedin Naturalists Field Club

April 23: Some impressions of Soviet Union, by E.C. Shaw, Red Lecture Theatre, Gt. King St., 7:30 pm  
May 7: Summer botany of Stewart Island, by H. Duff, Red Lecture Theatre, Gt. King St., 7:30 pm  
April 21: Field trip to Graham's Bush, 11am - 6 pm.

## Botanical Society of Otago

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