

40th Anniversary Celebration

Elizabeth Miller

Early evening on Saturday 9th March 2024, after the field trip to Lake Ōkāreka, RBS held a 40th Anniversary Celebration at the home of Sarah Beadel and Willie Shaw at Tikitere, Rotorua. The weather was kind and we wandered on a tour of the extensive native garden, admiring the growth of trees, shrubs and some herbaceous gems, all established since Willie and Sarah moved to the property a little more than 15 years ago. Some remembered visiting for the RBS 25th Anniversary shortly after they shifted in, and the property looks very different now, a tribute to their enthusiasm and perseverance.

The evening meal featured a superb smoked salmon, meats skilfully barbecued by two of the members, with plenty of advice, and an array of beautiful salads, breads and other good food put together by the committee, especially Sarah. This was followed by a classic Kiwi dessert of fresh fruit salad, pavlova and ice-cream. The spacious kitchen and decks made convenient, pleasant surroundings for the meal.

After the meal we gathered inside for more formal reminiscences with a background of historical photos contributed by members. Thirty people enjoyed the occasion, some from the first years of the society – a few for the whole 40 years. Others were closely involved for several years in the past or were more recent participants. There were a few greetings and good wishes from former members unable to be present.

Various people, including Willie Shaw, said a few words, and Sarah talked about her early involvement in the society and some memorable trips. Then Bruce Clarkson, who has lived for many years in Hamilton, but when working from the FRI Campus was a founder member of the society and inaugural president, reminded us of John Nicholls and other early influential botanists as well as some of the earliest field trips. He was delighted to see Mike Butcher at the evening. Mike has been an enthusiastic member and representative for the Eastern BOP since 2010, but in earlier days as a helicopter pilot had transported Bruce and colleagues to a remote bush study site.

Grateful thanks were given to Willie and Sarah for their hospitality and for the large contribution they have made to the society. The evening was a reminder of the camaraderie and knowledge sharing between members, and the occasion was enjoyed by all those fortunate enough to attend.



Sarah Beadel (left) showing special plants to guests on the garden tour.
Photo: Matt Buys.



Rotorua Botanical Society in the garden. *Photo: Matt Buys.*



Celebration feast. *Photo: Matt Buys.*



Willie Shaw reminisces to the gathering (Martin Pearce on left). *Photo: Matt Buys.*



Current President Sarah Beadel and Inaugural President Bruce Clarkson with the 40th Anniversary cake. *Photo: Matt Buys.*