SOME THOUGHTS ON RECORDING THE FLORA OF CANTERBURY

Previous presidents have drawn attention to the need for the Society to record permanently the many observations made on our field trips, the compilation of a species list for Canterbury based on herbarium specimens, the knowledge of rarer plants and their habitats and the use of these in helping to establish reserves.

This is an appropriate time to look again at these objectives in the light of Dr. David Dawson's report to the D.S.I.R. Biological Recording in Britain and its lessons for New Zealand, a copy of which was received by the Society and is available to members through the librarian. Dr. Dawson spent several months in Britain last year to investigate the centralised recording schemes there which make so much use of the observations of members of societies like our own.

Dr. Dawson recommends that a New Zealand scheme should begin by listing organisms found at point locations (rather than in grid squares), noting grid reference, topography, altitude, aspect and abundance of individuals, that it should begin with higher plants as these provide the habitat for other groups, and that it should begin in areas or habitats of conservation importance.

Many lists have been compiled by the Society and it should not be difficult to adapt our present practice to meet these recommendations when several hours are spent in one habitat, giving time to compile a comprehensive list and take specimens for identification where necessary. It may be of interest to return to the same area in another season to complete the list and the notes on abundance.

A checklist of the species of the province would be a useful reference for compilers of the lists. Mr. A.J. Healy has provided one for the adventive plants in The Natural History of Canterbury 1969. A provisional checklist of the native flora could be compiled by taking the complete alphabetical list of names drawn up by Geoff and Diana Kelly and used in Scenic Reserves of Canterbury 1972, and confirming the presence of any species in one of the four Christchurch herbaria, noting those which have not been collected within the last 30 years. One of our aims could then be to look for plants which we believe should be growing in the province but have not been recorded in the herbaria. The many published lists would provide the background knowledge. Groups of two or three members would be welcome to spend an hour or two at the Botany Division herbarium if they would like to see this project come to fruition. Perusal of such a list could lead members to note in what kinds of places the plants grow, and whether sufficient of them are protected from draining, ploughing, recreation or afforestation.

Do you know that the Canterbury Museum last year relinquished its herbarium so that the historical J.F. and J.B. Armstrong collections 1863-1923 have returned to the Christchurch Botanic Gardens to which they were bequeathed in 1926, and the remaining 20,000 specimens are at the Botany Division. These contain interesting Canterbury records.

I hope that we can reproduce copies of a sketch map showing the major rivers and altitude contours, on which habitats, findings of individual species, or more casual observations can be recorded and which could be reproduced in the journal from time to time by any member.

The three enterprises, listing plants location by location, compiling a checklist and mapping distributions are three inter-related facets of getting to know and enjoy our flora to the full.

Bryony Macmillan
President

BURNING MINE STOCKTON

an Extract by Peter Hooper

No moonscape
holds more loneliness

the manuka
spreads a white mat of flowers, the stunted flax

mutters by seepage holes and in the breeze
the long leaved orchid trembles purple bells.

THE LAND OF THE EPACRIDS

by L.B. Moore

The high misty plateau country northeast of Westport holds a special place in New Zealand botany. Denniston I heard of first because it was there that Dr. H.H. Allan went, about 1900, directly from his sixth form year at Nelson College, to teach at the small school. The miners' children and the peculiarities of the isolated community fascinated him but he took little note of the strange vegetation, as he regretted when, in later years, he turned from teaching to professional botany. His path probably sometimes crossed (unknown to both) that of Mr. W. Townson who had a pharmacy business in Westport about the same time, and was diligently collecting specimens for T.F. Cheeseman in Auckland. Townson published in 1906 a 53-page account of the vegetation of the Westport district, based on field work up the Buller to Mt. Owen, Mt. Murchison and Mt. Mantell, the Brunner and Lyell Ranges and the coast ranges from behind Karamea south to Mt. Bovis in the Paparoa Range. Mt. Rochfort (3417 ft) was one of his favourite hunting-grounds, and he knew Denniston on its slopes and the neighbouring peaks of Mt. Frederic (3630 ft) and Mt. William (3490 ft). Without making a careful check it is easy to find at least a dozen species described as new from his material.

North of the Waimangaroa River and approached from Granity by the Burma Road are the mines of Millerton and Stockton and the peak of Mt. Augustus (3316 ft). In early 1953 Ruth Mason and Neville Moar spent two days here at about 2500 ft near the site of open-cast mines. Their account of the vegetation and flora (1955) lists the species they