Distribution Records and Other Observations on Some Canterbury Plants

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Distributions of some Canterbury plants are recorded for the Lake Coleridge, Whitecliffs, and Upper Hurunui districts. Specimens are housed in the herbarium of the Botany Department, University of Canterbury.

Lake Coleridge

Near the Lake Coleridge Power Station occur isolated populations of some species which are commoner elsewhere in Canterbury.

Fuchsia perscandens. In a deep gully on the north side of the Rakaia River about 1.8 km west of the Power Station (S74/012783). In this locality plants must withstand fire, grazing, and frost. The site in the gully bottom has good air-drainage, is protected by shrubs, and is on stony ground.

Hebe traversii x H. salicifolia hybrids. A fine hybrid swarm between these two species, with various combinations of characters, is present in the same gully (S74/012783). Some plants, in late summer 1984, had sprays of flowers delicately lilac-tinted.

Linum monogynum. On a greywacke cliff facing the Rakaia River about 2.8 km west of the Power Station (S74/000785). The cliff is being blasted for boulders to use in river-control work so the few plants present will not survive for long. They grow with

Polystichum richardii and Blechnum chambersii. L. monogynum grows at Rakaia and Waimakariri Gorges but this is the farthest inland that I have seen it in Canterbury.

Olearia cymbifolia. One plant, on roadside near the surge chambers at the top of the Power Station pipelines (S74/030775). The plant was probably established from wind-blown seed within about the last decade. The species occurs more abundantly near Red Hill (southern Craigieburn Range) and in the Big Ben Range.

Pelargonium inodorum. Specimens of this species grew on each of a newly-formed path and road-bank near Lake Coleridge (S74/047794), after the sites were dug out, in the 1970s. They flourished for a year, then disappeared. I found it also on a newly burned beech forest site near Flock Hill Homestead in the Waimakariri basin. It was very abundant there a year after the fire in 1981 and absent in 1983. Pelargonium seems to be uncommonly seen. Its behaviour in the localities mentioned suggests that it may have long-dormant seed from which plants spring up after disturbance, only to die away within one or two years.

Pelargonium may not be truly indigenous to New Zealand. It may have emigrated from Australia during the early days of settlement.

Centella uniflora. A small population of this species grows on the bank of a small lagoon beside Lake Coleridge (S74/048792). It probably occurs near some of the tarns in the district.

Whitecliffs

The long, sharp-crested line of the Harper Hills is marked by basalt outcrops with remnants of shrubby native vegetation which are being depleted by burning to clear gorse and the subsequent herbicide spraying from the air and grazing.

Chenopodium allanii. Among scrub and broken rock on the summit of the Harper Hills (S74/356603). The shrubs include Helichrysum glomeratum, Corokia cotoneaster and Coprosma rigida.

Fuchsia perscandens. Same locality and habitat.

Gingidia geniculata. Same locality and habitat.

Urtica ferox. Same locality and habitat. This is the farthest inland that I have seen the species in Canterbury. The relatively fertile volcanic rocks and relatively warm habitat on a north exposure, (at about 425 m altitude), may account for this isolated occurrence.

Sophora prostrata. Further south east along the Harper Hills ridge occur populations of the prostrate kowhai, on basalt cliffs and outcrops (S74/369614).

Microlaena polynoda. Same locality and habitat.

Pelargonium inodorum. On loessic soil on the north slope of the Harper Hills in a site bull-dozed for a fire-break (S74/370615). This supports the previous observations about an association with disturbance.

An interesting walk near Whitecliffs can be made down the gorge of the Selwyn R. starting near Dalethorpe and emerging near Flagpole. The bush and scrub has been burnt-over and is scrappy, but the travel is pleasant on grassy flats in the valley with its

narrow stretches which open out in places. Abundant gorse in the lower gorge can be avoided on cattle trails. The most important botanical find, at the Dalethorpe end (S74/294721) was Notospartium torulosum, in scrub on the north bank of the river. I found specimens of the species at Hood's Bush in 1977 and Andrew Purdie noted its occurrence there in Journal 10, 1977. According to Andrew the species is present, but never abundant throughout the Malvern Hills.

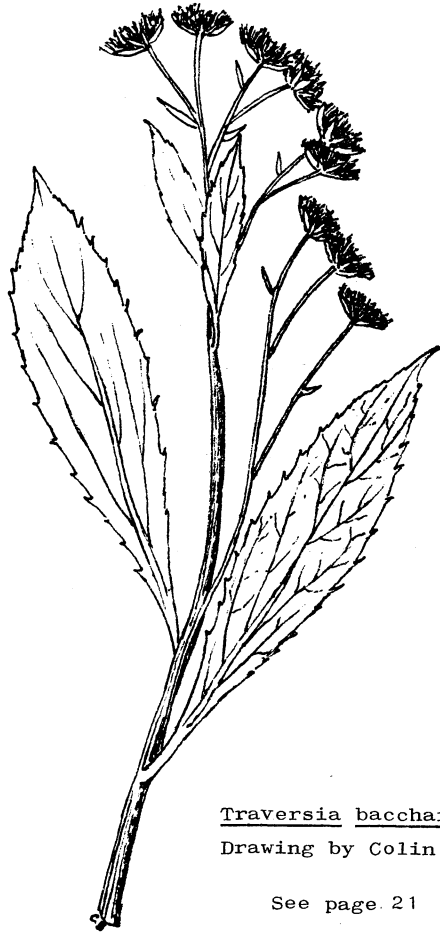
Hurunui

In the upper north branch of the Hurunui River near Harper's Pass the forest cover is attractive tall red, silver, and mountain beech, with some openings in the main valley and along the tributary streams. Some species rare in Canterbury occur there:

Podocarpus acutifolius. This shrubby species, looking rather like Cyathodes juniperina in leaf form, is present in openings near No. 3 hut (S52/432574). Brian Molloy (pers. comm.) also found it near the Sisters Stream, below Lake Sumner. I have not seen it in the upper Taramakau Valley on the Westland side, but I found specimens this summer in scrubby bush at the Otira township.

Olearia colensoi. Leatherwood is commoner in the Upper Hurunui near Harpers Pass than in any other Canterbury locality. Previous Journals have records of it from the White R. (Waimakariri), Upper Wilberforce R., Reischek R. (Rakaia Valley), and upper Havelock R. (Rangitata Valley). The latter locality was discovered by Hugh Wilson and David Given.

Olearia capillaris This divaricate species, found some time ago by Peter Wardle in the Thompson River (Poulter Valley), is common on Harpers Pass. Furthermore it hybridizes freely there with O. ilicifolia and O. arborescens. A wide range of leaf forms is present.



Traversia baccharoides
Drawing by Colin Burrows.

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