

# Newsletter

*For Friends of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc  
To Promote, Protect & Preserve*

*No 97, Spring 2014*

## **From Incoming President Alan Morgan**

I have a strange feeling of deja vue. You get that from being recycled.

It's not that I sought another term, there was simply no one else, no other hats in the ring. Sadly it shows up the age-old problem of committee phobia or maybe it is that we are all getting older and are saying "been there, done that, moving on".

But for me there is an up-side for there are a few things happening that make this an exciting time to be involved.

Firstly there's the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Charitable Trust which is currently awaiting the bureaucratic processing required to become incorporated. Not that it is waiting but working through all the setting up processes like establishing a data base of all the funding sources that may be tapped for future projects. The board maximum of 10 members has only one gap and that we are holding for a fundraising expert we are courting. Interestingly none of the board (except me) are members of the "Friends" but all are enthusiastic supporters of our Gardens as a vital community resource.

The trust board has a permanent place for the President of the Friends or his/her nominee and as I have been involved in the process for several years including earthquake caused delays, it is appropriate that I fill both roles at least for the first year. The Gardens staff and the council landscape architects are working on plans for the first project – the Gondwana Garden – and we are looking forward to an exciting vision that will stimulate the interest of potential donors.

The second major happening is the new building and the downstream changes it has brought about. It has become a destination in itself and that means more visitors and more publicity. It also has released two other buildings – the Tea Kiosk and the old visitor centre – for other and exciting uses. It also opens up diverse opportunities for our guiding team which has suffered from low tourist numbers since the quakes.

The third happening is the restructure of upper management turning the old Greenspace and Transport Unit into a new Parks Unit with a new manager, Andrew Rutlege, who has a distinguished background in parks management and parks consulting. We will watch with interest how all this shakes out.

Our first job as a committee is to co-opt some more committee members. On the basis that one volunteer is worth two conscripts we would welcome anyone who wants to make a contribution. It's not onerous and we will be rationalising the number on meetings to around eight per year with more on-line communication.

And of course there is always a need for more members and it will be a focus this year. We can all recruit members. Pick up some application forms from the Visitor Centre or phone/email me at 384-9976, 0274 356 615, or [a.morgan@xtra.co.nz](mailto:a.morgan@xtra.co.nz).

Thank you for having faith in me for another presidential stretch. I look forward to seeing you soon at one of our meetings or walks/talks

# Garden News

## From Curator John Clemens

At the end of July this year I took a brief and unexpected walking holiday in Switzerland to enjoy the alpine pastures, the exhilarating views, and the local cuisine of the Bernese Oberland. This was not intended as a working holiday; the purpose was relaxation and recuperation as I was under strict instructions from my very ill mother in England not to derail all holiday plans on her account. However, it is very difficult to take in a Swiss alpine environment without thinking about our own New Zealand alpine plants and where we can see them growing in the wild. In canton Bern the alpines are also grown in at least two types of botanic garden: one on the edge of the wild in the Alpengarten at Schynige Platte, and the other in the urban environment of the Botanischer Garten of the University of Bern. What are the parallels with our own successes at alpine cultivation and display?

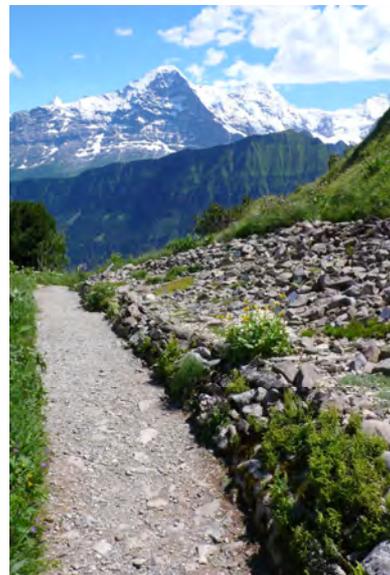
### Swiss alpines in the wild

It is a long time since I last went walking in Switzerland, and it was hugely reassuring to find the alpine pastures still full of glorious wildflowers and so accessible using the alpine footpath (plus cable car) system. When I visited some late spring flowering species were still blooming at the highest accessible altitudes (approaching 3000 m), and later season flowers were well advanced at lower levels (1000 m). Gentians large and small were particularly noticeable, diverse orchids seemed to be in all lowland pastures, and less common species clung to the rocks at high altitudes. Of course, the lower pastures, which might look natural or wild to the casual observer, have long been managed by fertilising, grazing, cutting and other land use practices. New Zealand's alpines are mostly found between 1250 m and 2000 m (a few reaching much higher, almost to 3000 m), which is comparable with the plants seen on this trip.

### A Swiss alpine botanic garden

Exploring the mountain tracks and landscape did not allow serious botanising so it was fortunate to have Schynige Platte nearby where the species in the Alpengarten are thoughtfully

arranged in different habitats and identified with labels and signs. This is a botanic garden located in (or at least on the fringe of) the alpine pastures at a middling altitude of 2,100 m. It is readily accessible from the valley floor (at 600 m) by an historic cog railway. Many alpine species are successfully cultivated in the ground with early and late season species from a range of altitudes flowering sequentially.



*The stunning backdrop of a botanic garden at an alpine altitude (plants labelled instructively to the right of the path).*



*A cluster of violas emerge from the high altitude turf.*



*A buttercup scrambles through and over loose scree.*



*Alpine gentians and thistle leaves.*



*The heath spotted orchid labelled in the alpine botanic garden.*

The garden is densely planted, allowing visitors to take in many species in flower before or after walking in the neighbouring semi-natural landscape. Some visitors probably come specially to enjoy and learn from the botanic garden itself, as well as for the scenic rail journey.

### **Alpines in a Swiss lowland botanic garden**

Some of the species seen in the wild, or in the alpine botanic garden, were also found in the botanic garden at the University of Bern. Here again, an ecological approach to layout has been adopted with Swiss alpine plants arranged according to where they might be found in the wild. Alpines from other countries are also displayed. The milder lowland environment (altitude 500 m), the diversity of the surrounding urban vegetation, and possibly past history (the garden was established in 1859) appeared to allow many low altitude and ubiquitous species to become established. The flowering season was well advanced relative to that at altitude. This is an instructive and intense botanic garden (<3 ha in area) with a well-developed educational programme. The alpine plants could be studied, but in a sheltered, urban setting.



*An ecological planting of alpine species in the University of Bern Botanic Garden.*

### **Parallels elsewhere**

Many readers will have seen wild and cultivated alpine plants in a diversity of environments around the world, and some of these might mimic the settings I have described above. Here in New Zealand we have a flora with a large alpine component. Just as in Switzerland, those of us who are more mobile and like to

travel or walk can see alpine plant displays in the wild although their beauty is probably not as appreciated as it might.

I do not know of an alpine “botanic garden” quite like Schynige Platte in New Zealand, but labelled plants and accessible walkways can, of course, be found in national parks and on popular routes, e.g. the Dobson Nature Walk and Arthur’s Pass Walking Track.

Schynige Platte takes the botanic garden and its visitors to the mountains, where both appear to be very contented. The parallel in New Zealand would be a satellite botanic garden in the alpine area. However, even if this were to be established, we do not have the same capacity to elevate large numbers of visitors quickly and breathtakingly from an urban area to an altitude of 1500 m or more (and bring them back down again).

As in Bern, an urban botanic garden in a temperate lowland area can grow alpine plants. Growing the plants successfully presents challenges that have typically been overcome by the careful selection of species for favourable outdoor growing environments. Alternatively, we can “take the mountains to the botanic garden” by building an alpine house that mimics the alpine below- and above-ground environment. This has been done with some horticultural success at Kew (the Davies Alpine House); it could also be done in a way that simulates the environment for visitors, one that feels like being in the alpine zone.

#### **Alpines online and in the flesh**

Lastly, it is wonderful what the casual viewer or avid student can enjoy and learn about our alpine flora by searching the many readily available digital sources of information. *Te Ara Encyclopædia of New Zealand* is a good one. The cascade of information from the “Short Story” to the sections of the full text is satisfying, and the images are outstanding.

Nonetheless, there is no substitute for feeling the intensity of the alpine environment (real or simulated) in person. If you are lucky enough to be in Switzerland, you might also like to taste the käseschnitte, rösti and raclette, but unlike

the beautiful landscape these are not to be consumed to excess!

Unfortunately, news came through on the journey back to England that my mother had died peacefully. I would like to say thank you to Friends who have expressed their sympathies, which are much appreciated.

## **Events in the Gardens**

From Anna Hoetjes, Information Officer, Gardens and Heritage Parks Team, DDI 941 7595

### **Voices of Spring**

A concert by The Opera Club.

Sunday 7 September, 3pm.

Ilex Function Room, Visitor Centre.

Celebrate the arrival of spring with an afternoon of song performed by some of Christchurch’s finest voices. Opera Club members \$15, non-members \$20.

Tickets available via Dash Tickets – [www.dashtickets.co.nz](http://www.dashtickets.co.nz).

### **Early Plant Collectors of New Zealand**

A Friends of the Botanic Gardens Lecture.

Sunday 14 September, 2pm

Ilex Function Room, Visitor Centre

The speaker will be Ines Schönberger, who is in charge of the Allan Herbarium, Landcare, Lincoln.

Members \$2, non-members \$5.

### **A celebration of Chinese culture – 10 Years of the Confucius Institute**

Saturday 27 September, 10am – 3pm

Ilex Function Room, Visitor Centre

Tai chi, martial art displays, calligraphy, paper cutting and a musical performance featuring traditional Chinese music and folk instruments.

Entry by gold coin donation.

### **Walking Festival - Secrets of the Gardens tour.**

Monday 29 September, 2 - 3.30pm.

Meet at the Armagh Street footbridge near the children’s playground.

Join staff to explore some of the lesser known parts of the Botanic Gardens including the back rooms of the new nursery.

Free.

**Spring Senses – a self-guided family discovery trail.**

Saturday 27 September – Sunday 12 October  
Explore the Gardens using your senses.  
Collect a trail booklet from the Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre (opening hours 8.30am - 5pm).  
Free.

**The Magician Who Lost His Magic**

A puppet show.  
Sunday 5 October, 1.30 & 3pm  
Ilex Function Room, Visitor Centre  
Come and hear the tale of the musical magician Melric who loves the natural world, the outdoors, the birds and the stars. Two 30 minute performances presented by Natural Magic Pirates. Entry by gold coin donation.

**A talk**

Monday 13 October, 10:30am  
Conference room, Visitor Centre  
By Ernst Van Jaarsveld, botanist and Curator of the conservatory at Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens, South Africa. Venue (tentative)

**The Bird and Insects of the Botanic Gardens.**

Sunday 19 October, 2pm  
A Friends' guided walk with guide Jeanette Christensen. Meet by the palm tree in front of the old Visitor Centre.  
\$2 per person.

**Family Fun Day, Beca Heritage Week.**

Sunday 19 October, 11am – 3pm  
The Botanic Gardens is one of the many destinations in the Central City to visit on this fun-filled family day. Enjoy interactive historic tours of the newly-opened conservatories, vintage machinery and colouring-in!  
Tour by gold coin donation.

**Christchurch Big Band Festival.**

Saturday 25 October, afternoon  
Ilex Function Room, Visitor Centre  
Prepare to be wowed by top big bands from around the country.  
Free.

**Ikebana exhibition.**

Wednesday 12– Tuesday 18 November  
Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre (8.30am - 5pm)  
As part of Cup and Show Week Sogetsu Teachers Association present a display of Japanese floral art.

**Adventures With Bees.**

Sunday 16 November, 2pm  
Ilex Function Room, Visitor Centre.  
Neil Fleming, an amateur beekeeper, is passionate about his bees and the adventures he has had getting the two hives settled upstairs on a balcony at his house. This was not his first adventure with bees.

**Regional planting days**

Keen to become involved in your parks and join the native forest restoration programme around the city? For more information visit: <http://www.ccc.govt.nz/cityleisure/parkswalkways/getinvolvedinyourpark/volunteerinyourpark/volunteerevents.aspx>

**Free event for members of the Friends –**

***Communicating in Science***

**22 October 2014**

This year's half-day research seminar - *Communicating in Science* – will be held in the Botanic Gardens on Wednesday 22 October 2014, 9 am – 12:30 pm. A great chance to join in and learn about genetic modification, pollination, conservation, which trees aphids like to feed on (!), and communicating in science. Presentations from staff and students from the Botanic Gardens, the University of Canterbury, and Scion, and from the summer students whom the Friends sponsored. Not to be missed. All welcome, those not trained in science included!

## Articles

### Professor William Stearn (1911 - 2001)

A useful and interesting book for those wanting to know more about the names given to the plants in our gardens is Stearn's Dictionary of Plant Names. Countless plants have been assigned Latin botanical



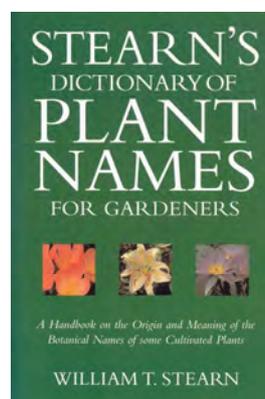
names since Linnaeus instituted botanical nomenclature in 1753, and many have aroused the curiosity of gardeners. What do these names signify? What characteristics do they describe? Who are the plants named after? Stearn's Dictionary will provide you with the answer.

And what of the man himself. The following account is based upon an obituary that appeared in the Daily Telegraph, Thursday 10 May 2001.

Professor William Stearn, who died aged 90 in May 2001, was one of Britain's most eminent botanists; his contribution to his subject was once compared to that of Robert Brown, Darwin and the Hookers.

During a career based first at the Royal Horticultural Society, then at the Natural History Museum, Stearn wrote some 470 books, articles and monographs, ranging from detailed studies of plant genera, through histories and biographies, to books on botanical taxonomy, many of which have become standard works of reference. Stearn was a mine of information on classical plant nomenclature, botanical history and illustration, and the lore and language of plants. In all his writings, he combined scientific rigour with practical relevance for the keen amateur gardener.

Perhaps his most important work was *Botanical Latin* (1966), an essential guide to the subject and an inexhaustible reference source for botanists and bibliographers. This was followed by Stearn's *Dictionary of Plant Names for Gardeners* (first published in 1972), a more easily digestible compendium designed for the amateur plantsman. Among other fascinating snippets, it revealed that the nasturtium derives its name from the Latin for "twisted nose", due to its pungent taste.



During the early 1950s, Stearn was responsible for drawing up the first draft of the international *Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants*, which supplemented the existing *Code of Botanical Nomenclature*, and introduced the terms "cultivar" (for a variety either raised or maintained in cultivation) and "grex" (for a group of hybrids of common parentage).

William Thomas Stearn was born in Cambridge on April 16 1911, the eldest of four sons of a coachman. His interest in natural history began during school holidays on an uncle's farm in Suffolk, where he started to look at wild flowers while keeping an eye on his uncle's cows. On leaving Cambridge High School, he was unable to go to university as his widowed mother lacked the means to pay for it. Instead, he became an apprentice bookseller at Bowes and Bowes in Cambridge, and taught himself about botany in his spare time. He joined a weekly mutual improvement group, spent his lunch

hours in the University Botany School and attended evening classes in German and bibliography.

William Stearn married Ruth Alford in 1940,; they had a son and two daughters.

Cherubic-looking with a froth of white hair, Stearn was a delightfully unassuming man, and was held in great affection by all who knew him for his great generosity with his time. At one time his entry in Who's Who listed his recreations as "gardening, walking", until his family changed it to "gardening, talking". It came as a surprise to many who met him to discover that despite his amazing erudition, Stearn was almost entirely self-taught.

Stearn published his first paper at the age of 18, on *Peronospora corollae*, a fungus disease that distorts campanula flowers. Thanks to his keen-eyed observation, the disease was literally nipped in the bud.

Before long, he caught the attention of E A Bowles, the celebrated Enfield plantsman, who recommended the 22-year old Stearn to the Royal Horticultural Society as a successor to its librarian, H R Hutchinson, who was due to retire in 1933.

At the RHS, Stearn continued his studies, learning Swedish and using his annual leave to visit botanical collections in Europe. Within a few years of his appointment, the RHS Library took delivery of the largest bequest of books it had ever received - from Reginald Cory - and Stearn took on the task of cataloguing the works. These early years at the RHS also saw the publication of his first detailed botanical monograph, *Epimedium and Vancouveria* (1938), and *Lilies of the World* (1935), a monograph ostensibly by Drysdale Woodcock and John Coutts, but which was largely written by Stearn.

After serving in the RAF in Britain, India and Burma in the Second World War, Stearn returned to the RHS, moving into the library while searching for somewhere to live.

Just before the war, the director of Wisley, Frederick Chittenden, had taken on the job of

editor-in-chief for a new *RHS Dictionary of Gardening*. As many botanists had subsequently been called up for active service, Chittenden wrote many of the articles himself. When he died in 1950, it fell to Stearn to co-edit and complete the work. He wrote entries on more than 500 plants, completing the fourth volume in just six months and becoming, as he recalled "a peculiar authority on plants from *So-onwards*".

In 1950, *The Art of Botanical Illustration* was published in the Collins New Naturalist series, and long remained the standard history of the subject. Collins had managed to commission Stearn and Wilfrid Blunt separately to write the work; when the confusion was discovered, it turned into a collaboration, though it was Blunt's name that appeared on the title page with Stearn's contribution acknowledged in the preface. Stearn's role was belatedly recognised in 1994 when he revised it for a new edition.

In 1952, Stearn represented the RHS at the International Botanical Congress at Stockholm, with proposals for a new *Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants*. While the delegates were sightseeing in Stockholm on the final day of the conference, Stearn set to work to produce a first draft, ready to hand out to botanists on their return to the hotel.

By the time the first edition of the Code was published in 1953, Stearn had left the RHS for the Botany Department of the Natural History Museum, where he worked for the next 14 years. After his retirement, he wrote *The National History Museum at South Kensington (1981)*, a comprehensive history of the Museum from the 1750s to 1980.

After retiring from the museum in 1976, Stearn took up the post of editor for the Greek botanical journal *Annales Musei Goulandris*, a job he continued to perform until the age of 88.

Among Stearn's botanical publications, he collaborated with E A Bowles on learned articles on *Allium*, *Lilium*, *Paeonia* and *Anemone*. He revised *Berberidaceae* for the *European Garden Flora*, collaborated with Hiroshi Hara and L H J Williams on *An Enumeration of the Flowering Plants of Nepal*

(three volumes 1978-82), and with Peter Davis on *Peonies of Greece* (1984).

In 1993, he and his wife Ruth translated and augmented Helmut Baumann's *Greek Wild Flowers*, a book which reflected one of Stearn's areas of expertise - the interaction between the ancient Greeks and plants, in folklore, mythology, medicine and art.

In his later years he wrote introductions or texts for works on botanical illustration including *The Australian Flower Paintings of Ferdinand Bauer* (1976), *An English Florilegium* (1987), *Hooker's Finest Fruits* (1989) and *Flower Artists of Kew* (1990).

His works on the history of botany include a collaborative biography of John Lindley, the former Secretary of the RHS, published in 1999 to mark the bicentenary of his birth, and *A Bicentenary History of the Linnean Society* (with A T Gage, 1988).

In 1976 he was awarded the Linnean Society's Gold Medal for services to taxonomic botany and for his 170-page introduction to the facsimile of Linnaeus's *Species Plantarum* (1957-9). No other botanist, it was said, had the knowledge of botanical history and the linguistic ability in Latin, German, Dutch and Swedish needed to write it, and the preface has become a classic study of the great naturalist.

In his final years, Stearn returned to the genus *Epimedium*, the subject of his first book, and was working with Brian Mathew on a new study of the genus when he died, continuing to examine specimens in his hospital bed. He referred to this new work as his "botanical swansong".

Stearn served variously as president of the Linnean Society, the Garden History Society, and the Ray Society. Among numerous honours, he was awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour by the RHS and the Engler Medal by the International Association for Plant Taxonomy. He was an honorary professor of Reading University and a visiting professor at Cambridge University's Department of Botany and Agricultural Botany from 1977 to 1983.

In recognition of his work on Linnaeus, he was appointed Commander of the Swedish Order of the Star of the North in 1980. He was appointed CBE in 1997.

## Earlier staff of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens

### Pat Stuart talks to Adrienne Moore

In 1943 at 15 having completed bursary, Pat Barton was too young to follow her ambition to be accepted for Training College as a physical education teacher. Her dentist was a friend of M. J. Barnett, Director of Parks and Reserves in Christchurch and it was suggested Pat try horticulture when she left school.

Pat joined the staff at the City Council Nursery at Linwood and biked there each day from her home in Upper Riccarton. Because she had Bursary qualifications she was paid slightly more than normal - £19.9s.9d per week in the hand.



Pat Stuart  
(with Hellebore 'White Magic' - taken 35 years ago)

All aspects of nursery work were taught at Linwood where the Nursery Supervisor was Gavin Henderson. Other staff remembered from this time are; John Taylor, Lawrie Metcalf, Mick Field, Rosa Field, Trevor Daikee, Margaret Naismith, George Malcolm, Ina Keily, Isobel

Cockerill, Rae Hammersley, June Anderson, Alex Lauder, John Jeffrey, Doug Thompson, Stuart Rout, Neiel Drain, Daphne Barnes, Bob Bulman, Ivor Harvey and Keith and Ross Stuart.

Trevor Daikee started the same day as Pat. One of their first jobs as trainees was to plant thousands of pines for Bottle Lake Plantation. A plasterer's trowel was used for planting the pines. She recalls "Trev was a great shot with a shanghai when we were bending over tree planting."

Trev married at a very young age. Mr Barnett took a great interest in his staff and queried Trev, but Trev's reply was that they were both boarding, and two could live cheaper than one. A year or two later when the first baby arrived, one very wet winter, Trev slung a line in the potting shed to dry nappies. Mr Barnett was both amused and amazed. Trev and his wife Daphne have remained lifelong friends as have both families' children.

Another task was sowing seed and growing all the bedding plants for the city. Wallflower seed was sown before New Year and then grown outside in nursery rows until May when it was planted out in town beds. Geraniums were propagated from cuttings and wrapped in willow root. Returned servicemen later did rehabilitation work at the nursery.

Trev and Pat were given driving lessons because there was often decorating to be done at weekends. They learned on heavy trucks. One of Pat's tasks was to take workmen on the back of the truck to their various jobs. Woe betides if there was any jerky driving. Another job was collecting hops from the brewery for composting.

The trainees often went on botanising trips to the mountains, sometimes with Professor Lance McCaskill, sometimes on their own.

When the senior florist had left her job to get married, Mr. Barnett sent Pat for floristry lessons to his friend Holly King. All types of floral work were undertaken by the City Council. Flowers were grown at Linwood especially for picking. At Council Meetings each member had an arrangement in front of them. Mabel Howard

was one of the Councillors and Pat remembers a newspaper article to do with "The Battle of the Flowers" when Mabel didn't get the one she wanted. The Town Hall and the Council Chambers were regularly decorated, and bouquets were presented to visiting dignitaries.

After 5 years at Linwood where she became propagator as well as florist, Pat was transferred by Mr. Barnett to the Botanic Gardens. He allowed time off for John Taylor and Pat to attend lectures at University and Pat was the second woman in New Zealand to gain the National Diploma of Horticulture with Honours and the first to study surveying, which was a requirement for the diploma. They used to travel on John's old motorbike which was constantly breaking down.

Her memories include working on rockeries on different parks around the city, setting out bedding plants, working in the rose garden with Miss Raine. The women staff members wore trousers with a smock on top at work. They were called trainees, and thus inferior to the men who were apprentices. Many birds found their way into Cunningham House and staff used methylated spirits to wipe bird dirt from palms. This may also have helped to control mealy bugs.

When Ina Keily, Rosa Field and Pat went on the Wanganella to Sydney on holiday Mr Barnett gave Pat six week's paid leave and introductions to spend time at nurseries and Sydney Botanic Gardens. Ina and Rosa stayed on and Pat came home, landing at Wellington by flying boat.

Other staff at the gardens in Pat's time were – Alan Morgan, Jimmy Cole, Dick Nanson, Lawrie Metcalf, Tiny Unwin, Graham Hollow, Rosalie Copland, Alex Clark, Alister Keay, Alf Tomes, Bill Clare, Pat White, Keith Welsh, Mick Sullivan, Lester Slade, Isobel Kitson and Graeme Patterson,

Every Friday night the trainees and apprentices would have a study group called "Mutuals" where they would have prepared a talk on a specific subject.

Fumigating the glasshouses was done by wetting the floor, then walking backwards out to the door spreading cyanide. No OSH in those days!

During Pat's time at the Gardens she became resident florist for Lord and Lady Freyberg when they were in Christchurch. Work involved decorating their residence "Daresbury" next to Mona Vale, and civic functions and balls. Often Pat would be invited to these functions as well as garden parties at Daresbury. When the Freybergs left Christchurch Lady Freyberg sent their equerry to the gardens with a gift of a pearl and marcasite brooch.

Flowers for official functions were now picked from the Botanic Gardens. Not long after Pat started at the gardens she had to make a bouquet for Vivienne Leigh. She picked a lovely bunch of anthuriums from Cunningham House - Paddy Mansfield was not impressed. As a punishment she had to clean the bird dirt off the palms for a week.

Pat was given leave to work for Harrison's in Palmerston North as head florist, in their shop in town. She had no retail experience at the time. Flowers and foliage were regularly picked from the nursery. After a year she returned to Christchurch to resume her job as propagator and florist.

Pat was a qualified judge and teacher in the Floral Art Society and Ikebana to level one teaching standard.

Pat also worked on the City Council floral float for the Christchurch Centenary - all fresh flowers. She was later asked to help with Dunedin's float when they had their centenary.

The final stint at the Botanic Gardens was making the Queen's bouquet on the royal visit in 1953 and helping decorate the Clarendon Hotel with Keith Stuart and John Taylor. John was leaning back on the balcony admiring his work, when suddenly the wrought iron gave way and he and the railing landed on a car parked below. John sustained no damage and that was the day he became engaged to Morag.

Twins Keith and Ross Stuart worked for Huia Gilpin in the Dunedin Botanic Gardens and on Huia's recommendation transferred to Christchurch for further experience. Ross is remembered for singing "Oh what a beautiful morning" from the depths of the stokehole – coal-fired boilers used to heat the glasshouses.

Romance blossomed between Pat and Keith who were married in 1952. John Taylor was their best man.

Keith had left the gardens earlier on and started a tree and shrub nursery in Clinton. Ross meantime had gone to the North Island to Duncan and Davies and other nurseries to gain more experience. When Ross returned they started a tree planting business in conjunction with the nursery. They grew and planted the pines for £16 10s per 1000 and made money. Their biggest job was 10,000 acres for the Otago Timber Company. They also specialised in farm shelter and amenity planting.

Their father approached Keith to manage the family farm at Waipahi near Gore. Ross carried on the nursery till his retirement when he handed the nursery over to his son James. Like many other horticultural enterprises this nursery has closed its doors.

During the years at Waipahi Pat developed the now well-known hellebore *Helleborus niger* 'White Magic'. Trevor Daikee was working at trying to produce a pink *H. niger* by crossing a red *H. orientalis* with *H. niger*. He gave Pat some of his seedlings. Three turned out much bigger than the parent. Pat gave Trevor back one of them but it didn't survive. She then carried on with the remaining two. These have been the breeding stock of 'White Magic' which now comes almost 100 per cent true.

When they first realised how good it was Pat took a flower to a local garden centre in Gore. The owner decided it wasn't all that exciting and she might sell twenty. Then she sent it to Harrisons where she had previously worked. Mr. Harrison offered her a pound for an ounce of seed. They decided they could do better. Now their daughter Kate with husband Ken Telford are producing and selling thousands.

Trevor's son came to work on the farm in school holidays from when he was 12 years old. He now has his own farm adjacent to Stuarts. His son used to work in the hellebore nursery in weekends and after school. The farm was large - 2500 acres. The married couples' wives used to work in the nursery which suited everybody.

Pat and Keith's children went off to varsity. Then Kate spent a year at Dunedin Botanic Gardens when Graeme Patterson was in charge. She then came home and became involved with the production of 'White Magic' for export. 50,000 were grown to get 15,000 for export. Careful selection of seed and attention to growing conditions were needed to meet the several inspections prior to export. The largest export order was 50,000 plants to Japan. In the meantime Keith had to build five tunnel houses to accommodate all the plants.

In 1984 when their son Lynn bought the family farm, Pat and Keith decided to move to Wanaka. They built a floral studio and garden centre. The population at that stage was 1,750. The locals said they were mad, not only for that crazy idea but to buy an acre of peat bog to build on. Maurice Skipworth from Dunedin, Keith's former boss, who now lived in Wanaka, looked at the section and told them to grow rhododendrons which they did, starting off with a job lot of 100 from Alan Trott. The garden has now been classified as a Garden of National Significance.

Keith decided he wasn't quite ready to move, and after the studio opened he went back to the farm, leaving Pat to manage in Wanaka. The business boomed and after six months Pat was employing six staff. Under family pressure Keith moved to Wanaka. Ten years later they had burned themselves out working seven days a week and leased the business as a garden centre which has now relocated. Currently the floral studio is a beauty therapist tucked in the garden.

After many years of development, in 1999 Keith and Pat released a lemon yellow hellebore called 'Moonshine' which is *H. 'White Magic'* and *H. sternii* cross. This was successfully protected by a plant breeder's right in Europe.

'Moonshine' is an upright bloom which will last as a cut flower.



*Hellebore 'Moonshine'*

In 1999 Pat was made an Associate of Honour by the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture for her career in horticulture.

Pat and Keith also started a seed business, growing and collecting exotic and native seed not normally available in shops. The business grew rapidly until there were 1200 on the mailing list. It became too time-consuming. When stricter laws were introduced with export they decided to close it down when a suitable buyer couldn't be found.

Pat and Keith's daughter Kate and husband Ken Telford have carried on and extended the breeding of hellebores with many exciting new hybrids coming through. In one publication they were quoted as the largest hellebore nursery in the Southern Hemisphere.

Some time after Pat and Keith sold the lease of the garden centre and were producing *Helleborus 'Moonshine'* they branched out into wholesale perennials. This business again grew rapidly. Clients ranged from Coromandel to Invercargill. Then came the landscapers.

Finally, now that Pat and Keith are in their 80's the business has become too big. They have sold off the stock and closed the doors, only growing plants now for their garden.

# Friends News

## Highlights of Annual General Meeting

17 August 014

The AGM was held at the Function Room, Visitors' Centre, Christchurch Botanic Gardens. Charles Graham chaired the meeting which was attended by 40 members.

It was observed in discussion that the membership of the society had dropped markedly in the previous few years, standing at 126, and that this could be attributed to an apparent decline in the activities offered to members. The incoming committee was urged to address the situation.

Following the election of officers:

- Alan Morgan became the new president.
- Dot Noordijk was re-elected as treasurer.
- Committee members were Charles Graham, Penny Martin, Don Bell and Leith McMurray.
- There were no nominations for vice-president, secretary, and for several more committee vacancies. It was agreed that the committee should co-opt a secretary.
- Vic Sykes was re-appointed as auditor.

Matters discussed under "General Business were:

- Botanic books from the collection of Max Visch were available for sale, the proceeds to go to the Friends of the Botanic Gardens.
- In view of the long walk from the nearest car park to the new Visitor Centre it was suggested that seats be placed along the way to assist elderly members. The chair undertook to raise this with the Gardens management.
- The committee was to recommend that the Christchurch City Council, in the next 10-year plan, include provision for the construction of a bridge across the river from the Armagh Street car park to the Visitors' Centre. This would be for the convenience of patrons, especially the elderly and infirm. A number of parking places for the disabled should be reserved close to the bridge.
- The committee was to also recommend to the Christchurch City Council that, pending the construction of a permanent bridge between the Visitors' Centre and the public car-park, a temporary bridge be provided as a matter of immediate necessity.

Alan Morgan advised that copies of the sesquicentenary history of the Botanic Gardens were available for sale at a discounted price, a portion of which is donated to Friends.

Curator, Dr John Clemens, reviewed significant developments of the previous 12 months. Following this he gave an illustrated address on strategies for mitigating the threats to endangered plants.

## Friends Christmas party.

The Friend's Christmas party will be held on the afternoon of Saturday 6 December. Make a note in your diary. Details will be given later.

**Special Deal for Members**  
**Botanic Gardens book**  
*Denise Hunter*

Bruce Bascand owner of Caxton Press has generously offered the Friends a special purchase/fund-raising opportunity.

The Botanic Gardens book was launched just before Christmas and this is a great chance to get your copy for less than retail and simultaneously make a contribution to the Friend's coffers.

	<i>Recommended retail prices</i>	<i>Friend's prices</i>
<i>Hard cover</i>	\$59.95	\$49.50
<i>Soft cover</i>	\$48.50	\$38.50

To order email Alan Morgan at [a.morgan@xtra.co.nz](mailto:a.morgan@xtra.co.nz) or phone 384 9976. Payment options will be advised.

**Contact Numbers**

*Committee*

President	Alan Morgan	384 9976
Vice-President		
Treasurer	Dot Noordijk	386 0595
Secretary		
Other Committee Members	Charles Graham	348 5896
	Don Bell	343 6690
	Leith McMurray	337 2008
	Penny Martin	332 6866
Ex Officio, Curator	John Clemens	941-7589

*Other Contacts*

Membership database	Philippa Graham	348-5896
Plant Propagation	Helen Constable	980-9358
Newsletter Editor	Bill Whitmore	339-8356
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*Membership enquires*                      *Philippa Graham (phone number above)*  
*Gardens enquiries*                      *Information Centre 941-6840 x 7590*

**Distribution of Newsletter**

We distribute the Newsletter by email to those members who have given us their email addresses and who have not requested otherwise. If you would prefer to receive the Newsletter by mail, rather than electronically, please contact Philippa Graham – phone 348 5896 or email [philippa.graham@gmail.com](mailto:philippa.graham@gmail.com)

**Friends of Christchurch Botanic Gardens Inc**  
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or [friendsofthegardens@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthegardens@gmail.com)

**Friends' website**

Have you visited the Friends' website?  
<http://www.friendschchbotanicgardens.org.nz/>