

Awards

- 1970 Loder Cup
- 1971 Wattie Book of the Year Award for the first edition of *Gardening with New Zealand Plants, Shrubs and Trees*.
- 1985 QSM for community work in spreading the "gospel" about native plants.
- 1989 Award of Merit from the City of Birkenhead for volunteer service.
- 1991 Associate of Honour of the Royal Institute of Horticulture in recognition of service to New Zealand Horticulture.
- 2009 North Shore City Council named an area of several hectares of reserve land near Island Bay in Birkenhead as the Muriel Fisher Reserve.

The Lucy Cranwell Lectures – 25 years on A personal view

Maureen Young

During the tenure of Ross Beever as President of the Auckland Botanical Society it was decided that a special lecture, to be given by a prestigious scientist, should be sponsored each year to commemorate the life and work of our founder and patron, Lucy M Cranwell. Lucy had lived in the USA since the war years, following her marriage to Watson Smith, then a Major in the American Armed Forces. Over the years she had continued to take a close interest in the society that she founded in 1937, and had made many generous donations whenever a project needed funding.

The obvious choice for the first lecturer was her dear friend and the other half of the duo known affectionately as "the two Lucys". This was Dr Lucy B Moore MBE, MSc, DSc, FLS, FRSNZ. Lucy Moore, after a distinguished career with the Botany Division of DSIR, had by this time retired to her home town of Warkworth. Thus it was that on 4 September 1985 the first Lucy Cranwell Lecture was to be given by Lucy Moore in the Zoology Lecture Theatre, Auckland University. There was much excitement and preparation in Warkworth beforehand. Letters were exchanged with America, with advice and questions from both sides. LMC wanted to know what was LBM going to wear? What was to be the title of the lecture? What visual aids would she use? Watson weighed in with advice to not be too scientific, but to be light-hearted and embroider the facts a little.

Lucy had no slides, so she borrowed transparency sheets and pens from Mahurangi College and made overhead projector transparencies showing the localities of the various excursions the two had undertaken in the late 1920s and the 1930s. She wore a maroon knit suit with a high neckline, and over this hung a little gold frog pendant that had been given to her by LMC during their "Moehau" years, to commemorate the tiny native frog, *Leiopelma archeyi*, then so common on the summit. The title of the talk was changed at the last minute from "Auckland botany in the Cranwell years" to "Cranwell botany in the Auckland years".

My friend, Frank Hudson, provided the wheels to get Lucy down to Auckland. She was by this time

becoming frail and a little unsteady on her feet, but pride dictated that this fact should be kept from others, so I had my orders to walk just in front and to one side of her, then if she stumbled she could put her hand on my shoulder to steady herself. The talk was less than inspiring, as her light voice, without assistance from a microphone and competing with the drone of the overhead projector, was lost in the large and rather gloomy lecture theatre.

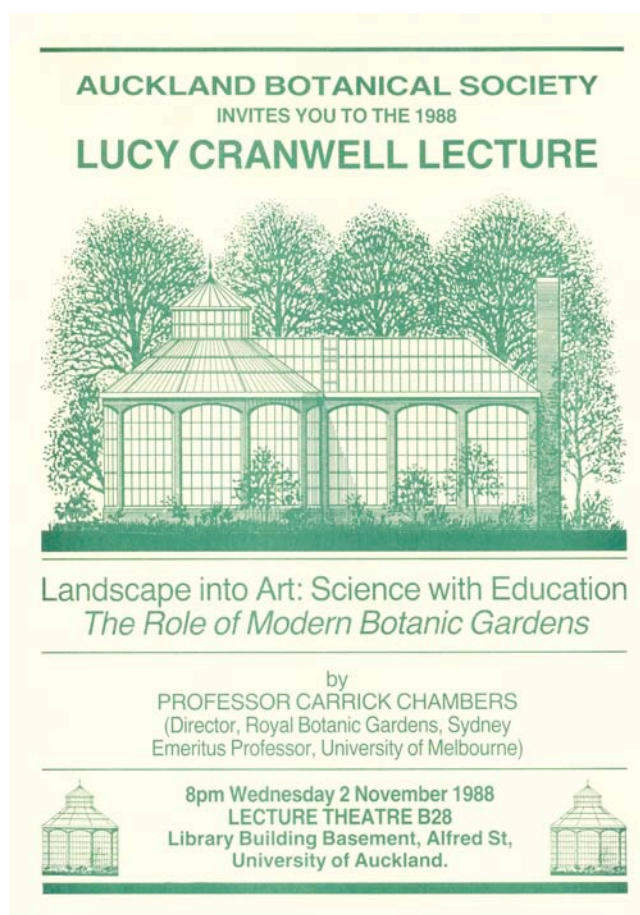


Fig. 1. Advertising flyer for the 1988 Lucy Cranwell Lecture.

Fortunately for posterity a transcript of the lecture was published in the ABS Newsletter Volume 41(2) July 1986, outlining the amazing adventures of the two young women – especially amazing when one considers not only the travel difficulties, but more especially the social restrictions of the time. As

Arnold Wall wrote in a poem published in the Auckland Star:

"While other girls devote their days to tennis,
tea and scandal,
They brave the pigs and cattle round the steeps
of Coromandel."

The 1986 lecture was given by Hugh Wilson. Hugh had published field guides to Mt Cook and Stewart Island, and had recently been surveying the botany of Banks Peninsula. He lived (and lives) his life in as sustainable manner as possible, and considers boats and trains to be the only ethical methods of mechanised transport. Thus it was that when he was sent money for his return airfare from Christchurch to Auckland he instead travelled up by train, bringing his bicycle with him. On the evening in question he arrived at the lecture theatre on his bike, clad in shorts and T-shirt. He wheeled the bike into the men's room and emerged some minutes later neatly dressed in clothes suitable for the occasion. In his talk, "The surprising botany of Banks Peninsula", he explained how a grid had been laid over a map of the area and random squares were chosen to survey in detail. Some grids included cliff faces, but not to be deterred he had called on assistance from an abseiling club and had surveyed the vertical slopes while hanging from a rope. After the lecture I overheard Frank ask him how he was getting home. Hugh replied that he was riding his bike back to Christchurch. "Oh well," said Frank, "it will be downhill all the way." The money saved would probably have kept him in food for a year.

ED (Dan) Hatch, a former president of ABS and sometime editor of the Newsletter, was chosen to present the Lucy Cranwell Lecture during our Golden Jubilee Symposium in 1987. He opened his talk, "The small green orchid", with the memorable words, "This is not really a lecture, it's more of a yak". He proceeded to outline how he began his botanical studies during the 4½ wartime years that he spent camped in an ammunition store at Waiouru, surrounded by live ammunition and a barbed wire entanglement. *Pterostylis patens* was the small green orchid that set him off on his lifelong interest in orchids, and HH Allan's suggestion that the New Zealand orchids badly needed revision led to his collaboration with experts from Australia to try to sort out the dilemma. The transcript of his lecture in ABS Newsletter Volume 43 (1) February 1988 is another of those articles that gives us a fascinating insight into the conditions that prevailed in the earlier days of botanical exploration.

The fifth lecture, in 1989, "Looking at plants with the eyes of a moa", was delivered by Ian Atkinson. This was a beautifully presented talk, and stands out in my mind as one of the more memorable of the series. Ian propounded the theory that over millions of years

of co-existence with moa, three basic modes of adaptation were developed by some New Zealand plants: avoidance, tolerance and deterrence. The divaricate growth form is now well known as a case of supposed deterrence, but many more examples were given. Oratia Native Plant Nursery supplied plants to decorate the lecture theatre, all chosen to illustrate the points made during the talk.

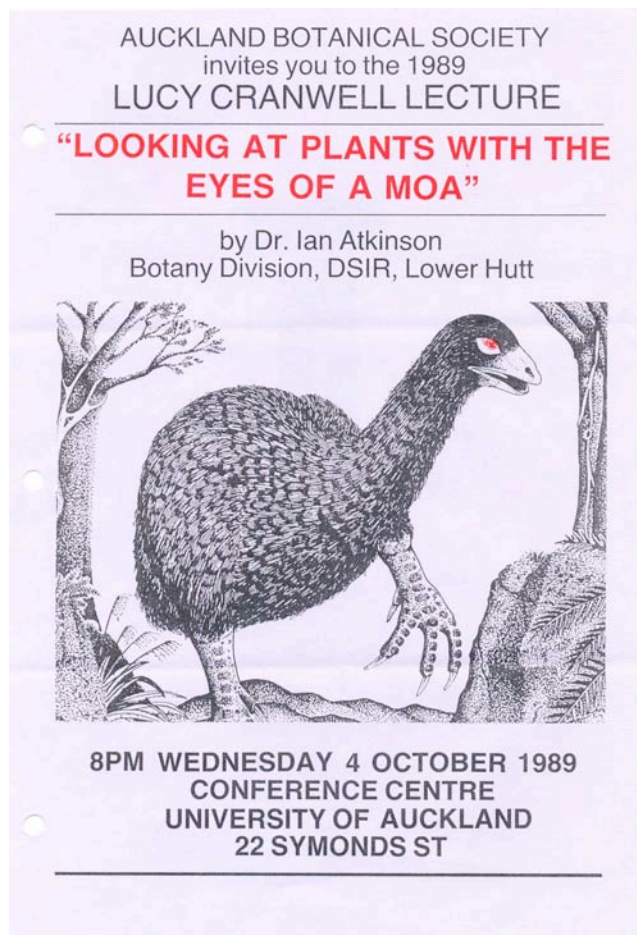


Fig. 2. Advertising flyer for the 1989 Lucy Cranwell Lecture.

In 1991 Colin Webb was struck down with a bad dose of influenza on the date of his lecture, "How flowers work". He bravely struggled through the talk, a microphone only just amplifying his fading voice enough for the audience to make out his words. How he must have welcomed his bed when he finally found it that night.

The 1992 Lucy Cranwell Lecture is the only one in the series that I have not attended. I had to choose, that year, between going to the lecture or to Borneo on a trip led by Ewen Cameron. Borneo won, but it was a difficult decision, as the talk was delivered by Australian Mary E White. Mary had not long since published her beautiful book "The Greening of Gondwana". Although the committee considered that a return airfare from Australia was beyond the means of ABS, President Anthony Wright contacted her anyway. Mary jumped at the chance to speak, saying that her publishers would pay the fare and she could

do some book promotion in New Zealand at the same time. A talk entitled "Australia's fossil flora and living Gondwana forest remnants" resulted, and by all reports was a fascinating account. In her introductory comments about Lucy Cranwell she stated (ABS Journal Vol 48(1) January 1993): "I did not know then that her work on *Nothofagus* would be part of the background to understanding Gondwana, the supercontinent in which I live mentally these days. I have escaped there, preferring the prehistoric world where all the problems have sorted themselves out during geological time and where all the once-endangered species are peacefully extinct. It is a more comfortable place than the modern world where one feels powerless to cure the problems caused by human over-population and its attendant ills. I think that had I been privileged to meet Lucy Cranwell I might have felt that we were on the same wavelength."

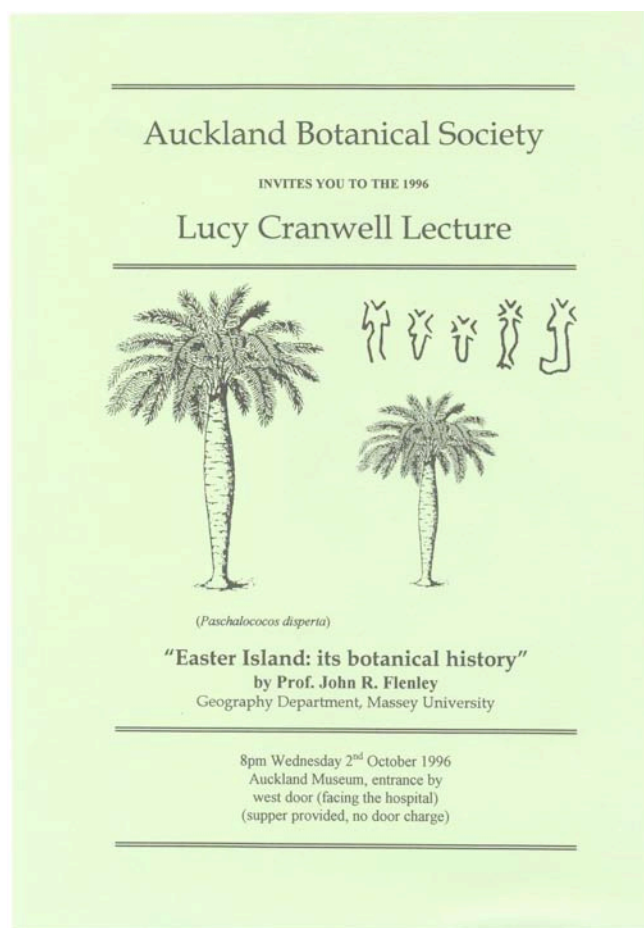


Fig. 3. Advertising Flyer for the 1996 Lucy Cranwell Lecture.

In 1994 John Morton, another elder statesman of the biological world, was asked to speak to us. Although his area of expertise was the seashore, he brought to our attention the complexities of communities and successions in the wider sense. ".....we have found a progression, running through essentially the same scale of diversity that can happen down a mountain slope of 8,000 feet, [or] down a tidal shore of 8 feet. But the great naturalist-traveller von Humboldt was to find its equivalence not just from sea level to a

mountain top, but through the 8,000 miles of a whole hemisphere, from Arctic tundra to equatorial rain forest. A *Mountain*, a *Shoreline* and a *Hemisphere*, show us the same gradation, from austerity to luxury."

In 2000 Brian Molloy wove together the story of one of his major interests, the New Zealand conifers, with the early explorations of Lucy Cranwell and her friend, Lucy Moore (the two Lucys) on Te Moehau at the northernmost extremity of the Coromandel Peninsula. He outlined the conifers that were mentioned in the Lucys' writings, and pointed out that they, and other botanists, had incorrectly identified some that are found on the mountain. Difficulties have arisen over the years because this is the northern limit for some species, and natural hybrids cloud the issue, especially where one parent is not present. He pointed out that Moehau, so beloved by the two young women, has acted like a "mainland island" and is a botanical gem.

Gondwana featured again in the seventeenth lecture in 2001, when Ken Hill from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, spoke on the exciting discovery in Australia of a new genus and species of conifer. His talk, "The Wollemi pine (*Wollemia nobilis*), a hidden Gondwanan relic with a modern story", outlined the finding of this ancient tree by David Noble in the Wollemi National Park, not far from Sydney. Both fossils and fossil pollen have been matched with the pine – there can be few plants that have been found as fossils before they are known in "the flesh". He ended his talk with the challenge, "What else is out there?"

In 2006 the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network Conference in Auckland was held in conjunction with the Cheeseman Symposium, celebrating the centenary of the publication of the first edition of Cheeseman's Manual of the New Zealand Flora. The keynote address at the Symposium, Ewen Cameron's "Thomas Frederick Cheeseman (1845-1923)", was the Lucy Cranwell Lecture for the year. Due to the pressures of programming Ewen had to compress the talk considerably, so for the first time in the history of the lecture it was repeated the following year. The second time around a wider range of our membership benefitted from hearing the full address in the relaxed atmosphere of the Auckland Museum. As President Mike Wilcox noted in his introduction, it was appropriate that Cheeseman, Lucy Cranwell and Ewen Cameron should be brought together for this auspicious occasion in the museum in which they all had worked so hard.

So far no report of Ewen's lecture has appeared in our Journal, and unfortunately three other lectures share the same fate. They are:

1988: Prof Carrick Chambers – "Landscape into art: science with education. The role of modern botanic gardens" (Fig. 1.).

1995: Dr Peter Johnson – “Have you seen my rata? And other excursions among plants”. (I enjoyed, and use, Peter’s labels of “perforata rata” and “umbellata rata”.)

1996: Prof John Fenley – “Easter Island: its botanical history” (Fig. 3.).

George Gibbs, author of the recently published book “Ghosts of Gondwana” was the Lucy Cranwell Lecturer for 2008. The subject of the book is historical biogeography, and evidence such as that provided by Lucy Cranwell’s pollen studies helps re-construct the past. The question George asked is, what heritage remains from Gondwana, and what was lost during the Oligocene drowning? This can be summarized as vicariance (biota that travelled here with the land) versus dispersal. The vicariants are the “Ghosts of Gondwana”, and there is evidence that there was not a total disruption during the drowning.

The twenty-fifth lecture, the recently delivered “Lessons from the coastal wetlands of Great Barrier Island”, outlined the studies undertaken by John Ogden, and students under his supervision, in the Kaitoke Swamp and Whangapoua Estuary. Core samples taken from the swamp showed the successional processes occurring over time, including the changes brought about by Maori, and then European, settlement.

So it is that over a quarter of a century we have voyaged through time from Gondwana to the present day; to far-away places; to hidden corners of New Zealand; and have become acquainted with interesting facts about plants and people. A fitting tribute indeed, to our founder and benefactor, the indefatigable Lucy Cranwell.

References

Wall, A. 1930: Untitled poem. Auckland Star newspaper.

The Lucy Cranwell Lectures 1985 – 2009

1985: Dr Lucy Moore – “Auckland botany in the Cranwell era”

1986: Dr Hugh Wilson – “The surprising botany of Banks Peninsula”

1987: Edwin D (Dan) Hatch – “The small green orchid”

1988: Prof Carrick Chambers – “Landscape into art: science with education. The role of modern botanic gardens” *

1989: Dr Ian Atkinson – “Looking at plants with the eyes of a moa”

1990: Dr Patrick Brownsey – “New Zealand ferns and allied plants”

1991: Dr Colin Webb – “How flowers work”

1992: Dr Mary White – “Australia’s fossil floras and living Gondwanan forest remnants”

1993: Dr Wendy Nelson – “Marine invaders of New Zealand’s coasts”

1994: Prof John Morton – “1937 at the Poor Knights: the first words on shore ecology”

1995: Dr Peter Johnson – “Have you seen my rata? And other excursions among plants” *

1996: Prof John Fenley – “Easter Island: its botanical history” *

1997: Prof Barry Tomlinson – “What is pollen for?”

1998: Neill Simpson – “The flora and landscape of the Otago and northern Southland mountains”

1999: Dr Matt McGlone – “Post glacial vegetation and climatic history of southern New Zealand”

2000: Dr Brian Molloy – “Lucy Cranwell and the New Zealand conifers”

2001: Dr Ken Hill – “The Wollemi pine (*Wollemia nobilis*) – a hidden Gondwanan relic with a modern story”

2002: Prof Phil Garnock-Jones – “The ancestors of *Hebe*”

2003: Dr David Galloway – “The Kew connection: the Hookers and NZ botany”

2004: Bill Sykes – “Himalayan alpine plants”

2005: Dr Peter Heenan – “Biosystematics – more than providing a name”

2006 & 2007: Ewen Cameron – “Thomas Frederick Cheeseman (1845-1923)” *

2008: Dr George Gibbs – “The origin of New Zealand’s flora: how much do we really know?”*

2009: Dr John Ogden – “Lessons from the coastal wetlands of Great Barrier Island”*

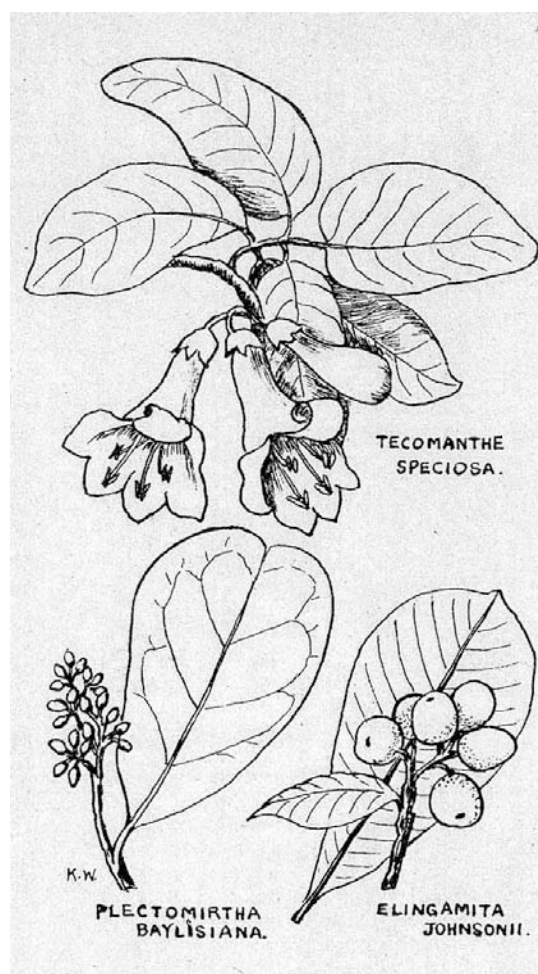
* As yet unpublished.

Historical Reprint

This article appeared in the 6 April 1966 issue of the *NZ Weekly News*. Article sourced by Maureen Young.

Plant discoveries

by Kathleen Wood



The Three Kings Island group have yielded some remarkable botanical discoveries in recent years, two of them so rare that only single plants were found.

The first of these, *Plectomirtha* [*Pennantia*] *baylisiana*, is a tree with resinous bark, large, dark green glossy leaves and small flowers which form a drupe or nut. It was named after its discoverer Dr G.T.S. Baylis, of Otago University, who found only the one tree on Great Island in 1945. There also he found only one plant of a beautiful climber, a member of the Bignonia family. A year later Dr E.G. Turbott visited the island and gathered flowers and cuttings. Specimens were sent to Kew for identification and the plant was named *Tecomanthe speciosa*.

The next discovery was at West Island in 1951 when Major M.E. Johnson found a tree that was new to our flora [actually discovered by Major Johnson in Jan 1950 and described in 1951 by Geoff Baylis]. This grew on cliffs

above the scene of the tragic wreck in 1902 of the passenger steamer *Elingamite* and it was decided to name the new tree *Elingamita johnsonii* to commemorate this event. *Elingamita* is described as a glabrous tree with smooth bark. It has obovate leaves about four to seven inches long, yellowish flowers and bright red fruit.

All these discoveries give the off-shore islands a tremendous value as sanctuaries for some of the rarest plants in the world; indeed, they are unique in this respect.

It is pleasant to note that the climber *Tecomanthe speciosa* has been successfully propagated from cuttings brought back from the original plant. First grown at the Plant Diseases Division at Mt Albert, rooted cuttings have been distributed and grow well in frost-free places. The rich, waxy cream flowers are beautiful and when in season can be seen in all their glory at the Auckland University where there is a fine specimen in cultivation.

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