MARGUERITE CROOKES 1895 - 1991

Miss Marguerite Crookes, so well known and most respected by older members of the Auckland Botanical Society, died on Saturday, January 24th, 1991, at Selwyn Village. She had been a resident at the Village for some nine years and unfortunately many of her friends had lost contact with her. This does not in any way mean that we had forgotten her and the wonderful contribution she had made to botany in New Zealand, and especially to the Auckland Botanical Society. We respected her knowledge of the New Zealand ferns and of plants in the Waitakere ranges. Her two major revisions (three editions) of Dobbie's *New Zealand ferns* (1951, 1952, 1963) has stimulated many recent studies in this field. It is a great pity that her planned seventh edition, with still further revisions and comment, was never published.



Marguerite W. Crookes (Madge to most of us) was borne in Clay Cross in Derbyshire, England. She was one of a family of four children brought to Auckland by their parents in 1906. Madge was eleven when she attended Miss Bewe's School for Girls, then the Auckland Girls Grammar and finally Auckland University College. She graduated B.A. in 1920 winning the Tinline Scholarship in English and in 1922 she obtained an M.A. with double honours in Botany and English.

During 1923-26 she tutored a winter course of lectures in Natural History under the auspices of the Workers Education Association. So popular were these lectures that her students persuaded her to lead excursions in the Auckland region to study plants in their natural habitat. The participants of these field excursions then formed themselves into the W.E.A. Natural History Club. This Club is still very active (as the Auckland Natural History Club).

In the early twenties Marguerite wrote and illustrated a series of articles on native plants for the *Auckland Star* and the *Lyttleton Times*. In 1926 these articles were published in book form by Whitcombe & Tombs under the title *Plant life in Maoriland - a botanist's note book*. During 1928 she published a series of 7 detailed articles on Rangitoto in *The New Zealand Smallholder*, followed in 1931 by a series of 8 articles on orchids (Fig. 1).

In 1929-31 a series of sixteen articles appeared in *The New Zealand Smallholder* on growing New Zealand ferns by Elizabeth Kibblewhite (Appendix 1), and in one article the readers were invited to join a fern club. One wonders whether these articles stimulated Madge's interest in ferns. In the preface to the fourth edition of *New Zealand ferns* she records her lasting gratitude to Miss E. F. Kibblewhite for first arousing her enthusiasm for ferns. It was too at this time that a family holiday house was built among the bush in the Waitakere Ranges, at Mountain Road, Henderson Valley. Elizabeth Kibblewhite and her fernery in Charlton Ave, Mt Eden were certainly responsible for Madge's interest in the genus *Asplenium*. Observations they made in this fernery aroused Madge's interest in reports of possible hybridism between the so-called forms of *Asplenium bulbiferum*. Madge worked as a research student in the Botany Department at Auckland University College growing *Asplenium* prothalli in culture in order to attempt cross fertilisation. Unfortunately nothing came of these studies.

Her researches in ferns and their classification continued. Betty Allan (née Molesworth, then botanist at the Auckland Museum) and myself had many lively field trips with her in the Waitakeres. In the 1940's she saw the need for a revision of New Zealand ferns especially the Hymenophyllaceae and, following publication of Copeland's *Genera Filicum* (1947, Chronica Botanica, Waltham) and Holttum's revision of leptosporangiate ferns, (*J. Linn. Soc. Bot.* 59: 123-158, 1947), Madge published in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 'A revised and annotated list of New Zealand Filicinae' (1949). She corresponded with many fern

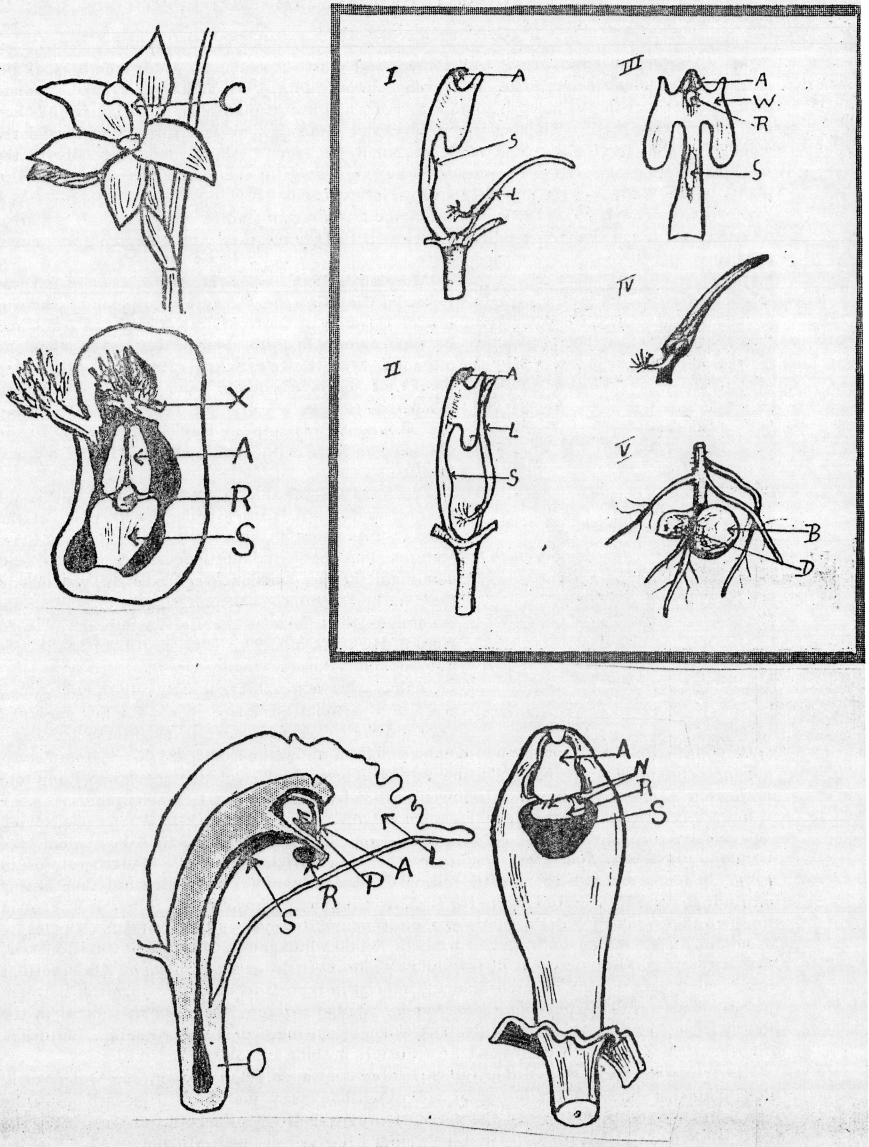


Fig. 1 A collation of illustrations used by Madge Crookes in her orchid articles for *The New Zealand Smallholder.*

authorities, especially people interested in species in the Pacific basin including Professor E. B. Copeland and R. E. Holttum. During the Pacific Science Congress held in Auckland in 1947 she had the opportunity to meet Holttum in person. This began a life-long correspondence. In the nineteen seventies Madge went overseas on a tour of the Holy Land with her sister and on the way home met up with Holttum again. He was of course retired but working in the herbarium at Kew on the Malaysian flora.

In Bulletin 4 of the Auckland Botanical Society she discussed local species of Hymenophyllaceae. These articles were quickly followed by the publication of the fourth edition of Dobbie's *New Zealand ferns* edited by M. W. Crookes. Fern enthusiast H. B. Dobbie's *New Zealand ferns* was first published in 1921 (as the second edition) and the third edition was published in 1931 (see discussion on dates and edition numbers by J. D. McCraw, *NZJ Botany* 26: 171-178, 1988). Dr H. H. Allan in the forward to the fourth edition writes 'in the present editor we have one with courage enough to embark on the task, enthusiasm enough to carry it through, and knowledge enough to bring it to a successful issue'. The fifth edition (virtually a reprint of the fourth) was published in 1952. In 1951 she was awarded the Loder Cup for her work with New Zealand ferns. In 1962 in another Botanical Society bulletin she produced a key to local species of Hymenophyllaceae. The sixth edition of *New Zealand ferns* was published in 1963. On the title page the authorship is appropriately given as, 'Marguerite Crookes, M.A. Incorporating Illustrations and Original Work by H. B. Dobbie'. 'Dobbie & Crookes' and subsequently 'Crookes & Dobbie', with their clear photographs and straightforward descriptions, proved invaluable handbooks for scientist and layman for almost 40 years. While recently superseded by Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth's *New Zealand ferns and allied plants* (1989 David Bateman, Auckland) they still remain important information sources. A seventh edition of *New Zealand ferns* was prepared but was finally turned down by the publishers. Some of the plates needed replacing and the publishers apparently (and erroneously) thought that there was no longer a demand for such a book. However, a photocopy of the third edition of Dobbie's *New Zealand ferns* appeared on book-sellers shelves in 1987.

When the Auckland Botanical Society was formed in 1937 Madge was elected a member of the first committee. She served continuously on this Committee for twenty years and held the office of President and vice-President many times. In 1943 she initiated the quarterly newsletters and was editor for twenty years. In these early days members were reluctant to contribute to it and the editor herself wrote at least fifty percent of its contents. In 1962 she gave up her editorship. She was elected an honourary life member of the Society in 1964 and members presented her with a large silver tea tray as a mark of appreciation of her many years of service.

She excelled in selling botany to the layman. She lectured on both native orchids and ferns. As it was before the days of 35 mm slides these lectures were illustrated with large hand drawn charts to demonstrate the points used in identification. Her field excursions were always well attended for, not only would one learn something about plants, but also about the place one was visiting. She had many short anecdotes and a quick wit. Her articles in the Newsletter showed her wide interest in plants, places and people. In the fifties her friendship with Professor Arnold Wall, then living in Auckland, no doubt stimulated her interests in weeds and the part they played in local plant communities. In Newsletters of the 1956-57 period a series of six short articles on 'Weeds in Auckland gardens' were printed. In 1977 she had a new look at the subject in an article titled 'Unwanted visitors' in which she described garden escapes in the Henderson Valley which had become well established as weeds in the period of fifty years she had lived in the Valley.

An Auckland Botanical Society Bulletin entitled 'Finding plant names' illustrated by Kathleen Wood (Katie Mays) was published in 1958. It was a simple, compact, glossary of the mass of technical terms used in botanical texts especially those used in plant identification.

Conservation, a term not used in her era, was one of her interests. She worked hard for the cause, especially to save small bush remnants within the Auckland area. She summarised the Society's efforts in the Silver Jubilee Bulletin 'Preliminary list of native plants of the Auckland District and a short history of the Society' (1962). In October 1973 a short series of articles on coastal plants appeared on the leader page of *The New Zealand Herald*. They were illustrated by Jean V. Livingston. In March 1974 she made a submission on behalf of the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society for their objection to the Waitakere Tip scheme, a scheme which

would have ruined the lower waterway of the Waitakere Stream and of course Bethells Swamp. It was said that the way she presented her evidence and pleaded for the preservation of one of the last swamps in the Auckland area won their case.

In the late nineteen fifties and sixties she enjoyed exploring the Piha and Karekare Valleys and adjoining areas with the late A. D. Mead, then field advisor to the Auckland Regional Authority. I shared many mugs of billy tea with them and was shown planned new tracks and the upgraded old ones known to me in my student days. In this area A. D. Mead named two of these new tracks 'Lucy Cranwell' and 'Marguerite', after these eminent Auckland botanists both, of whom he knew so well. In 1972, when Arthur Mead moved to Wellington to live with his daughter Iris Coulter, she wrote an appreciation of A. D. Mead and his work in the newsletter under the title 'A most valued member'.

About Madge herself - she belonged to an era long since passed. As she was an unmarried daughter she lived at home with her parents and was there to meet any emergency and then of course to look after her parents in their old age. As well as attending University she had studied painting with John Weekes at Elam School of Art. She got great pleasure out of painting in watercolours and oils. She was for many years a member of the Tuesday Group who met to discuss each others works. She had many good friends among Auckland artists especially in the forties and fifties for she had interesting ideas on the interpretation of her subjects.

Among university friends she was an active member of the Auckland Philosophical Society and Professor Anderson and his family were among her special friends. In her fifties she had courageously learnt to drive a car and when her parents died the family's holiday house in Mountain Rd, Henderson, became her permanent home. She called it Brockis Holt for her young nieces and nephews called her 'the badger'. She enjoyed living in the Waitakeres and the bush was her garden. She had a small apartment in her sister's Epsom home which she used as a *pied-à-terre* if her commitments in the city meant an overnight stay.

She will always be remember by her old friends for her graciousness, her warm and generous nature, and for her dedication to botany but perhaps botany as an art more than a science and as a result she managed to communicate her view to everyone.

WRITINGS OF MARGUERITE CROOKES

Crookes, M.W. 1926: Plant life in Maoriland - a botanist's note book. Auckland, Whitcombe & Tombs.

- 1928: Rangitoto - a national heritage. The story of its birth. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **10(6)**: 326.
- 1928: Rangitoto - a national heritage. The days of its infancy. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **10(7)**: 397.
- 1928: Rangitoto - a national heritage. Lilies of the field. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **10(8)**: 454-455.
- 1928: Rangitoto - a national heritage. The wonder of its ferns. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **10(9)**: 518.
- 1928: Rangitoto - a national heritage. Ferns and their allies - the oldest inhabitant. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **10(10)**: 582.
- 1928: Rangitoto - a national heritage. Its treasure of orchids. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **10(11)**: 650.
- 1928: Rangitoto - a national heritage. Orchids once more. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **10(12)**: 710.
- 1931: Our native orchids and their cultivation. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **13(11)**: 699a-700a. (*Thelymitra*, *Earina*).
- 1931: Our native orchids and their cultivation. [No. II.] *The New Zealand Smallholder* **13(12)**: 763-765. (*Pterostylis*).
- 1931: Our native orchids and their cultivation. [III.] *The New Zealand Smallholder* **14(2)**: 73-74. (*Chiloglottis*, *Caladenia*).
- 1931: Our native orchids and their cultivtion. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **14(3)**: 135-136. (*Microtis*, *Prasophyllum*).
- 1932: Our native orchids and their cultivation. Our beautiful thelymitras. *The New Zealand*

Smallholder **14(4)**: 195-197.
- 1932: Our native orchids and their cultivation. Two mid-summer blossoms. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **14(6)**: 307-308.
- 1932: Our native orchids and their cultivation. On alpine heights. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **14(9)**: 475-476. (*Lyperanthus, Townsonia*).
- 1932: Our native orchids and their cultivation. On alpine heights (sic). *The New Zealand Smallholder* **14(10)**: 536-537. (*Bulbophyllum, Dendrobium, Earina*).
- 1949: A revision and annotated list of New Zealand Filicinae. *Transactions Royal Society, New Zealand* **77**: 209-225.
- 1952: Some ferns of Mt Egmont. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **9(2)**: 4-6.
- 1956: Some weeds in my garden Part I. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **13(4)**: 4-6.
- 1957: Weeds in my garden. Part 2. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **14(1)**: 4-6.
- 1957: "The green cathedral" by Charles Cozens. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **14(2)**: 6-7
- 1957: Weeds in my garden. Part 3. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **14(2)**: 7.
- 1957: Weeds in my garden. Part 4. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **14(3)**: 4-6.
- 1957: Weeds in my garden. Part 5. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **14(4)**: 3-4.
- 1957: Weeds in my garden. Part 6. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **15(1)**: 5-6.
- 1958: A little fern hunting in Nelson. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **15(2)**: 4-5.
- 1958: Finding plant names. Illustrated by Kathleen Wood, *Bulletin, Auckland Botanical Society*: 12pp.
- 1958: A coastal valley, *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **15(2)**: 5-6.
- 1958: Calling all fern hunters. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **15(2)**: 6.
- 1958: Difficult to know. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **(8)**: 2-4.
- 1959: "A Pelican in the Wilderness" by Fraser Darling - a book review. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **16(3)**: 7-8.
- 1959: The cliffs of karekare. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **16(4)**: 5-6.
- 1960: On the slopes of Pirongia Auckland. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **17(1)**: 5-7.
- 1961: A Brief History of the Auckland Botanical Society. 7pp.
- 1961: Helps with Ferns. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **18(3)**: 5-7.
- 1961: "New Zealand Medicinal plants" by S. G. Brooker and R. C. Cooper. A Review. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **18(4)**: 5.
- 1961: Something on Mosses. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **18(4)**: 8-10.
- 1962: List of Native Plants of the Auckland District and a short History of the Auckland Botanical Society 1937-1962. Silver Jubilee. *Bulletin of the Auckland Botanical Society*.
- 1962: A long time ago. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **19(4)**: 4-7.
- 1962: Club Mosses. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **19(2)**: 4-7.
- 1962: On the North Shore. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **20(1)**: 4-5.
- 1962: The Editor Packs her Bag. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **20(1)**: 8-9
- 1963: New Zealand ferns, 6th edition. Incorporating illustrations and original work by H. B. Dobbie. Christchurch, Whitcombe & Tombs.
- 1964: Some notes on the Tawari. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **21(2)**: 10.
- 1964: The West Coast Project. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **21(2)**: 10-11.
- 1964: News of Members *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **22(1)**: 5-6.
- 1964: Olive and Sandalwood. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **22(3)**: 8-10
- 1964: An unexpected find. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **22(3)**: 10.
- 1966: New books of interest. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **23(1)**: 2.
- 1966: Which is which. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **23(2)**: 10.
- 1966: Obituary, Professor Arnold Wall (1869-1966). *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **23(2)**: 11-12.
- 1969: Taumata track. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **26(1)**: 3-5.
- 1970: Pohuehue. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **27(2)**: 8-11.
- 1971: Karekare. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **28(3)**: 2-4.
- 1972: On a much valued member. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* **29(3)**: 2-3.
- 1972: A review of "Native Flora of the Waitakere Range, Auckland". *Auckland Botanical*

Society Newsletter 29(3): 4.
- 1973: Bethells Swamp. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* 30(2): 2-4.
- 1973: Man Eaters of the Waitakere Swamp.
- 1973: Tall Native Plants to be seen best in the Bush.
- 1973: Tough strugglers beaten by Cuddy Pets illustrated by J. V. Livingston. *NZ Herald October 1973.*
- 1975: Fern and Fern Allies in New Zealand by Eric Heath and R. J. Chinnock - a review. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* 32(2): 7-8.
- 1977: Unwanted immigrants. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter for 34(1)*: 1-2.
- 1980: Obituary Mrs P. Hynes - *Auckland Botanical Society News-sheet for June.*
- 1981: An Old Friend Lost - obituary Mr F.M. Warren. *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* 36(1): 1.

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Dobbie, H.B. 1951: New Zealand ferns 4th edition. Revised and edited with additional matter by Marguerite Crookes, M.A. Auckland, Whitcombe & Tombs.

Dobbie, H.B. 1952: New Zealand ferns 5th edition. Revised and edited with additional matter by Marguerite Crookes, M.A. Auckland, Whitcombe & Tombs.

Taylor, M., Crookes, M.W., Wheeler, J.M., Green P.S. 1967: Local Species of *Coprosma*, Hymenophyllaceae, *Astelia & Collospermum*, and the wild olives. *Bulletin, Auckland Botanical Society*: 29pp.

APPENDIX

The New Zealand Smallholder was a quality popular journal published during the late 1920's and 1930's by New Zealand Newspapers Ltd, Shortland and Fort Streets, Auckland. Included in it are a number of fern articles by H. B. Dobbie, and a series of 18 by Elizabeth F. Kibblewhite, the first woman to receive the National Diploma of Horticulture (NZ). In the 12th of her articles (May 16, 1930), Miss Kibblewhite announces the formation of a Fern Society, the secretary being Mrs M. Parker of 4 Charlton Ave, Mt Eden, a friend if not her neighbour. In the issue for July 16, 1930 it is reported that 28 had applied to join the society.

These articles are of particular interest to fern enthusiasts. The following compilation will assist anyone wanting to track them down.

Dobbie, H. [B]. 1928: New Zealand tree ferns. Six sorts everybody should know. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 10(6): 320-321.
- 1928: Forked tree ferns. A forest of 'em at Tauranga. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 10(7): 407 (see also p. 547).

Dobbie, H.B. 1928: The propagation of ferns. An interesting garden hobby. 10(9): 514-516. (see also pp. 575-576).

Kibblewhite, E. [F] 1929: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 11(9): 460-461. (rockery ferns).
- 1929: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 11(10): 528-530. (rockery ferns).
- 1929: Ferns and how to grown them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 11(11): 589-590. (bush ferns).
- 1929: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 11(12): 653-655. (bush ferns).
- 1929: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 12(1): 10-11. (roadside ferns).
- 1929: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 12(2): 69-71. (manuka scrubland ferns).
- 1929: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 12(3): 133-134. (tree ferns).
- 1930: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* 12(4): 196-198.

(seaside ferns).
- 1930: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **12**(5): 273-274. (bush ferns).
- 1930: Ferns and how to grow them. Mountain dwellers. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **12**(6): 324-326. (upland species).
- 1930: Ferns and how to grown them. The "stay-at-homes" of the fern world. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **12**(7): 393-395. (rarer and endemic).
- 1930: Ferns and how to grow them. Sunworshippers of the fern world. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **12**(8): 457-458. (sun-loving species).
- 1930: Ferns and how to grow them. Dwellers of the Hot Lakes District. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **12**(9): 519-521. (thermal species).
- 1930: Ferns and how to grow them. More treasures from the bush. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **12**(10): 579-580. (bush species).
- 1930: Ferns and how to grow them. Species peculiar to the Auckland province. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **12**(11): 652-653.
- 1930: Ferns and how to grow them. On wooded hillsides. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **12**(12): 723-724. (bush margin species).
- 1930: Ferns and how to grow them. Under the golden kowhai. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **13**(3): 153-154 (blechnum &c.).
- 1931: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **13**(4): 224-226. (filmy ferns).
- 1931: Ferns and how to grow them. More treasures from the damp bush. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **13**(5): 292-294. (filmy ferns).
- 1931: Ferns and how to grow them. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **13**(6): 364-366. (filmy ferns).
- 1931: Ferns and how to grow them. Relatives of the Killarney fern. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **13**(7): 438-440. (filmy ferns).
- 1931: Ferns and how to grow them. Life history of a fern. *The New Zealand Smallholder* **13**(8): 518. (prothalli).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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J. M. Dingley