

KEEP AN EYE ON WAHLENBERGIA

By L.B. Moore

In Canterbury tussock country one of the commonest flowers is the so-called native hare-bell, *Wahlenbergia albomarginata*. Ranging from periwinkle blue to almost white, the five-pointed flowers face upwards on their slender stems and always attract at least a passing glance. They are worth looking at more closely, as we found on the excursion to Hood's Bush Reserve at Whitecliffs on 12th March, 1977.

At the mouth of the corolla tube the lobed stigma is obvious but the stamens are tucked down well out of sight and can be seen only by splitting the flower lengthwise. The short filaments are flattened and frilled at the base, and the anthers are brown, twisted and empty. To see whole anthers it is necessary to dissect an unopened bud at about the time it moves from the nodding to the erect position. Normally the pollen is shed inwards long before the stigma is mature and the grains adhere to the style as it elongates as the bud bursts. This is the usual and well-known arrangement.

At Hood's Bush one observant member noticed that some flowers were different. The stamens, instead of being attached by their bases, were fused to the corolla tube and their thin unopened anthers were easily visible in the throat of the tube. These seemed to be effectively female flowers that produced no pollen at all. We did not make an extensive search but about a dozen flowers picked at random on the tussocky hillside included several of this unexpected kind. Next summer it will be worth watching to see just how common these unisexual flowers might be, and whether any single plant bears only one kind.

THE TUDOR KNOT GARDEN

By Alfred Maddock

The knot garden, which could occupy a bed or a number of beds was most typical of Tudor times. It came in with the first Tudor, Henry VII, and went out with the last Elizabeth I. Knots or clusters of shrubs and flowers made up the design as they did, and still do, in certain types of embroidery.

The outline was made up of close-planted shrubs and the interstices filled with flowers or more usually with different shrubs - Lavender, thrift, dwarf-box, hyssop, germander, savoury and other sweet-scented herbs were favourites. They were kept low, clipped and clippings used for strewing lead, plain or cut out like the battlements of a church, oak boards, tiles, or shank bones of sheep were highly thought of as decorative edgings. Round white or bluish pebble stones were thought more fashionable than shank bones.

The knot gardens at Holyrood were shaped like a fleur-de-lis which must have pleased Mary Queen of Scots. Stars, crescents, concentric circles and favourite strap work provided Motifs for knots. Noble men and gentlemen had their arms laid out in knots, while country housewives

spread their linen out to dry on the shrubby knots in their own small square gardens. The floral clock at Edinburgh is doubtless a descendant of the Elizabethan knot gardens. Elizabethan knot gardens were mainly made up of shrubs because flowers were few, and mainly spring flowers, at least in the early Elizabethan period. This explains the real meaning of the old nursery song "Here we come gathering nuts in May". The word "nuts" is really a corruption of "knots". Knots of May were really knots of spring flowers gathered from the fields by old custom on May Day. The Queen went gathering knots of May at Lewisham the year before she died.

Elizabethan knot gardens were knotted with perennial shrubs ranging in colour from silver to green, box and black yew which when laid out in designs and patterns gave the Elizabethan garden both its winter interest and its summer delight.

TAWHAI GROVE

By Anthony Holcroft

In 1850 Charlotte Godley wrote of Oxford, in North Canterbury: "It is a very pretty place, from the beauty of the woods, which are very extensive and run down over the hills, leaving patches of grass, so as to look just like fine park scenery". Those woods, with their luxuriant glades of fern have long since vanished, of course; yet something of the sylvan character of early Oxford lingers still in the remnants of beech scattered over the foothills. They enhance the surrounding farmland with a park-like character that is visually stimulating. Sadly, though, most are in bad shape, and must sooner or later disappear if not properly cared for.

At the beginning of 1976 we purchased one such remnant in a small valley about 5 miles west of Oxford. There was a variety in the 19 ha site which appealed to us. On the eastern boundary, below a dry slope covered chiefly in broom, a shingly stream flows beside an extensive swamp of native rushes. At one time there grew here a fine stand of kahikatea. One tree, presumably a sapling when the trees were milled, still stands. When we first walked over the swamp, the rushes were chewed down by cattle, and very much choked in parts by blackberry. After two seasons of spot-spraying with knapsacks, the blackberry has all but disappeared, and the rushes now form a dense stand that becomes daily more difficult to penetrate.

Above the swamp a steep hillside watered by springs slopes back to the western boundary where the property adjoins the View Hill Scientific Reserve. The hill is clothed partly in mature beech and partly in rough grass, gorse and regenerating manuka. The bush contains some fine specimens of black beech and a thin sprinkling of younger rimu, kahikatea, matai and pokaka. We were also to discover that this is good orchid country (see Dr. Moore's article - "An Orchid Walk in North Canterbury" in the 1969 Journal).