

# Obituaries

## Jean Veal 1920 - 2004

The Auckland Branch and the Institute as a whole has lost one of its most distinguished members with the recent death of Mrs Jean Veal, Associate of Honour. Jean had a long association with the Institute: she became a member in 1964, was elected a Fellow in 1977, and then was elected in 1992 to Associate of Honour, our highest distinction.

Jean was born in Auckland and brought up in Epsom, and she could reminisce of the days when Epsom was almost the country and Greenlane was still an unsealed road.

Even as a child she was interested in plants and this developed further during her tramping trips to many parts of New Zealand. Later, she spent four years in Melbourne and this gave her the opportunity of seeing very different plants growing under very different conditions. She returned with her newly acquired Australian husband, Ron, and together they established a garden on the cliffs above Torbay, on Auckland's North Shore. It wasn't ever the tidiest of gardens because it was a true plantsman's garden filled with a wonderful range of fascinating plants.

Jean never had the chance of a professional training in horticulture but she had a knowledge and understanding of plants that would be the envy of most professional horticulturists. She was self taught from a fine collection of horticultural books and journals and from careful observation. She was an active member of many specialist societies including the Camellia Society, the Iris Society, the Alpine Plant Society, and the Salvia Society and a number of more informal plant groups. She had a lively mind and greatly enjoyed vigorous discussions about plants. She was no "sweet little old lady" - she relished a spirited argument and

very seldom were any prisoners taken. She would express her views forcefully, and woe betide a treasurer who did not maintain the books to her standards. The financial records she herself kept for societies could be taken as a model of clarity and rigour.

Jean was a great worker for the Institute. She filled almost every role on the Auckland Branch Committee - member, secretary, treasurer, and above all, newsletter editor. She was a registered show judge and she judged at many shows and also assessed gardens. She was also involved in the training of younger judges.

For almost 30 years, Jean made many contributions to the Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens. Even before the Gardens were officially opened she was donating plants. She served on the committee that planned the events at the opening in 1982. A year later, she was elected to the Steering Committee that established the Friends of the Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens. She and Ron were both Foundation Members and then at the First Annual General Meeting of the Friends she was elected Treasurer, a position she held for another seven years. She organized plant sales tables to raise funds and her horticultural knowledge made her a most useful member of the Shrubs Evaluation Panel. She did a plant census of the gardens, identifying plants and checking their nomenclature. Her many contributions were acknowledged when she was elected an Honorary Life Member of the Friends in 1991. To the end of her life she retained an interest in the Gardens and Jack Hobbs related at her funeral how he got regular phone calls and notes "telling us what we really should be doing".



In more recent years, Jean suffered much from ill health: she spent long periods in hospital and was frequently in physical discomfort. Her body may have betrayed her but her mind and her spirit certainly did not. Even when confined to her last hospital bed, she continued to take an interest in the small garden visible from the window. She tried to accept with good grace the indignities brought by age and ill health.

I first knew Jean because my mother and her older sister, Elsie, had been at school and university together. I then met Jean again at meetings of the Auckland Branch and I was both impressed and somewhat intimidated. She knew so much about plants. Meetings of the Auckland Branch were enlivened by discussions centred around the plant table, for which members brought in specimens. Jean and other excellent plantsmen, such as the late Hugh Redgrove, would join in "discussions" on the identity and nomenclatural niceties of the plants displayed. It was great fun to watch even if, as a new and very ignorant new member, I was not game to participate. But no matter how vigorous the discussions, Jean and the others were animated by a passion for plants, a passion that is too seldom shown in our meetings today. She will be missed for her enthusiasm for plants and as a great companion and good friend.

**Ross Ferguson**

# Ronald Angus Proctor

## 1918 - 2004

Ron Proctor was born in Hawke's Bay to a farming family. He was educated at Wellington College and Napier Boys' High School, before moving to Christchurch with his family in World War II. The family began a commercial grape growing venture at Papanui where Ron's interest in horticulture was sparked.

He was bred for plants. His grandfather had been head gardener at Stirling Castle, and taught Ron much about plants. A bout of poliomyelitis in childhood made him unfit for war service. However, Ron was passionately keen on sport and trained hard to overcome his disability. He succeeded to the extent of playing senior rugby and representing Canterbury. Ron developed a strong relationship with the Christchurch Beautifying Association and the Canterbury Horticultural Society, giving generously of his time and expertise to both organisations.

His capacity to view the larger picture, working harmoniously with others and to promote horticultural pursuits in the interests of all sectors of the community, was one of the hallmarks of his life. As Chairman of the 1974 Commonwealth Games Gardens Committee, he strenuously promoted the Garden City. As Horticultural Society President and convenor of the Christchurch Floral Festival, he continued to encourage people to become involved in horticulture. He was a garden competition judge for nearly 40 years who generously shared his extensive knowledge and experience. Ron served as President of the Christchurch Beautifying Association, and for many years as the Vice

President. He was elected Patron of the Papanui Beautifying Association, and served for many years on the Christchurch Street and Garden Awards Committee. For many years, Ron served on the national executive of the Nurserymen's Association.

Ron managed his own garden centre for 22 years where he became known for selling rare and unusual plants. He was regarded as a specialist in the Proteaceae. However, his interests were not confined to horticulture. As a long time member of Rotary, including time as President, he was instrumental in seeing numerous landscape projects completed. After 36 years service, he received Rotary's highest honour, the Paul Harris Fellowship. Ron was awarded the QSM for services to the community and to horticulture, and was made an Associate of Honour of the Institute of Horticulture. Ron was very supportive of the Institute, and in particular the Canterbury Branch. Ron's last involvement with the Institute was attending the opening of the 2003 Conference in Christchurch.

People have said that Ron was a practical man, always ready to lend a hand. He was a generous, respected gentleman who enjoyed strong and loving support from his wife, who died in 1998. He is survived by his two daughters. I had known Ron for many years, but it was not until he joined me in sourcing gardens for the Institute's Open Garden Scheme that I really got to know him. Even though he was in constant pain, he would turn out every Saturday as we traversed the length and breadth of Canterbury. The esteem in which Ron was held



was evident at these country homes, and it became impossible to keep to the planned timeframe. Over the last few years, I joined Ron in watching his beloved Crusaders, and enjoying his sense of humour. Ron was certainly a true Crusader.

**David Moyle**