

Geranium traversii
Halocarpus biformis
Haloragis erecta
Hebe armstrongii
H. parviflora
Hebe cultivars
Helichrysum intermedium
Hibiscus trionum
Hydrocotyle moschata
Isotoma fluviatilis
Jovellana sinclairii
Leptecophylla robusta
Leptinella calcarea
L. serrulata
L. squalida subsp. *mediana*
L. traillii subsp. *traillii*
Leptospermum scoparium (prostrate)
Leptostigma setulosa
Linum monogynum
Libertia ixioides
L. mooreae
L. peregrinans
Lobelia angulata
Lophomyrtus bullata
L. bullata × *L. obcordata*
Luzula picta
Melicope simplex
M. simplex × *M. ternata*
Metrosideros carminea
Microlaena stipoides
Microsorium pustulatum
Muehlenbeckia astonii
M. axillaris
Myosotis saxosa
Myrsine argentea
M. divaricata
Neomyrtus pedunculata
Nertera depressa
Nothofagus fusca

N. menziesii
N. solandri var. *solandri*
Olearia avicenniifolia
O. paniculata
O. solandri
Pachystegia insignis
P. minor
Parahebe lanceolata
Pelargonium inodorum
Pennantia baylisiana
P. corymbosa
Pimelea prostrata subsp. *prostrata*
P. prostrata subsp. *ventosa*
Pittosporum obcordatum
P. pimelioides
Plagianthus divaricatus
Podocarpus hallii
P. nivalis
Pomaderris amoena
P. hamiltonii
P. rugosa
Pseudopanax discolor
P. ferox
P. lessonii
Pseudowintera axillaris
P. colorata
Pteris tremula
Pyrrhosia eleagnifolia
Raoulia hookeri
Rhabdothamnus solandri
Rhopalostylis sapida
Rubus × *barkeri*
Scandia rosifolia
Scleranthus uniflorus
Sophora chathamica
S. tetraptera
Teucrium parviflorum
Toronia toru
Xeronema callistemon

"Aspects of Darwin: a New Zealand celebration" eds. D. Galloway & J. Timmins. The Friends of the Knox College Library, Dunedin. 2010. 180 pp. NZ\$34.95 & p/p.

Reviewed by Rhys Gardner

Charles Darwin's bicentenary, 2009, was also the centennial of the Presbyterian Church's Knox College. Taking this as an auspicious conjunction rather than otherwise, the College library played host that year to a day-long symposium on Darwin and his influences. Those lectures are presented in this book together with a bibliography.¹

The essays have not been expanded beyond their original lecture form and are thus quite short. Much of their Darwiniana is fairly well-known, while other scientific material is mainly of a recapitulative or preliminary nature. Some of the most immediately useful information is the bibliography, some references being to botanical journals I, for one, have never heard of.²

Two passages of reminiscence are especially entertaining. Eric Godley tells of his long life as a "Neo-Darwinian", central to which was his time postwar at Cambridge University, where he coached

one of Darwin's descendants in boxing and rugby, and tested his own fitness against alpha-male Sir Ronald Fisher (mathematics, beer-drinking, "excellent" dancing). Failure to survive Fisher's matrix algebra³ did not prevent Godley from getting a post back here at Canterbury University, where (he implies) there had been no coherent teaching of genetics or evolution until then. I am unsure whether or not this might be an example of pre-adaptation.

David Galloway worked at the British Museum herbarium in the 1970s and part of his essay relates (alas too little) about the remarkable personages there (Blanche Henrey was charming and beautiful, but William Stearn was "a rather difficult character in some ways"). David recounts with verve his rescuing of treasures: the Banks and Solander lichens, from a leaking starling-ridden tower in BM, and priceless pattern-plates of Hooker's "The Botany of the Antarctic Voyage", from a defunct publisher's waste-room.

Elsewhere too there are hints of oddness. In his introductory essay George Peterson notes how strange it is that Darwin did not know of Mendel's work. Mendel did publish obscurely, but he also sent out 133 reprints to libraries throughout Europe; apparently though not one of Darwin's many correspondents sighted the work or thought it worth passing on. Peterson also mentions Loren Eiseley's contention that English naturalist Edward Blyth, writing twenty years before the "Origin", anticipated Darwin's concepts of natural selection but was not properly acknowledged. (See websites for much more information here, including a cogent rebuttal from Stephen Jay Gould).

I add my own canard about 20th C. German entomologist Willi Hennig, who in one of the essays is given his usual title "Father of Cladism". It is perhaps slightly odd that Hennig should not have known that for a very long time philologists, many of them German, had been grouping languages according to shared innovations. But what can we make of his overlooking the work of Darwin's "prince of observers", Fritz Muller (1821-1897, German entomologist, Mullerian mimicry) who long ago had published a diagram and arguments (West 2003, p. 126) that exemplified the principles of cladism?

Other essays contain more positive things, including some directives. Molecular biologists are reminded that facts will always trump statistics (Ewan Fordyce on NZ penguin and whale fossils), and librarians will find reason not to cull "useless old textbooks", thus allowing especially history of science studies to be carried out efficiently (to answer questions like the one Eric Godley addresses: when was the term 'Natural Selection' first used in NZ science school education, and when were genetics and evolution first taught at Canterbury University?). The Otago University Special Collections librarian is particularly to be envied in this regard, nearly everything for his Darwin exhibition being immediately to hand; his essay is a celebratory one indeed for book-lovers (except, who took that copy of Malthus?). The exhibition itself is currently available at the university's website.

John Stenhouse in his essay relates the progressive acceptance of the theory of evolution by 19th C. Dunedin institutions and personages. There is no mention of our greatest field geologist, Alexander McKay (1841-1917), an honorary Dunedinite at least by Scottish birth and time spent in Otago generally. This might seem surprising: McKay, a self-educated man, collected a huge number of fossils in his long life and was said to have habitually read Lyell's "Principles of Geology" deep into the campfire-lit night. But so far as I can tell from a recent biography (Bishop 2008) he never once remarked on evolution, nor on religion either.

The book resides in sombre brown covers, a noble portrait of Darwin in old age on its front. The paper is of good quality, even though there are no colour illustrations.⁴ There are few typos, but a set of references (Frederick Hutton's NZ works) is missing, and a quotation by Darwin crucial to his way of thinking is given wrongly at one place (correctly later on p. 126). But in all, the authors, editors and their supporters (Caversham Foundation; Allan Wilson Centre) are to be congratulated for getting this nice-looking book out so expeditiously. It is noted as being the College's "Hewitson Library Occasional Monograph No. 1". We can hope that future numbers might also have a biological focus; for religious studies in this supposedly clean and green country, bioethics must surely lie squarely in one of the Lord's fields.

Continuing thus I want to suggest that many of the essays' illustrations are actually jokes. Eric Godley gives a pair of photographs that prove he and three mates were much more serious as students than as luminaries of NZ science forty-two years later (well, perhaps this is just how things should be). There also seems to be a face at the upstairs window of his rather sinisterly titled "Conduit House" lodging in Cambridge, though perhaps it is just Dick Matthews' mother. David Galloway shows some lichens collected by Darwin in Tierra del Fuego; it looks as if Jemmy Button assisted with the label-writing as well as the collecting. A sketch of geologist James Hutton appears to show him interrogating three facial profiles in the cliff-face he has been hammering at -- ah, what could one not learn from the old fossil-geologists?

¹Contents: Preface, D. Galloway & J. Timmins; Foreword, G. Petersen; Reminiscences of a Neo-Darwinian, E. Godley; Darwin's Life and Method, A. Musgrave; Darwin's Voyage on the Beagle, L.S. Davis; Darwin's Beagle Lichens, D. Galloway; Darwin's botany and the nature of species, P. Lockhart; Darwin's legacy and New Zealand fossils, E. Fordyce; Darwin's health, E. R. Nye; Constructing Darwin, D. Kerr; The Darwinian debates in Dunedin, J. Stenhouse; Darwin as a theoretical and mechanistic biologist, D. Penny; The Bishop and the Scientist, A. Bradstock and H. Campbell; Afterword, M. Austin: "together we have saluted and paid homage to the founder of the Science of Life whose logic is compelling in its creative simplicity". Bibliography. No Index or List of Illustrations.

²See References below for an additional article on Darwin and New Zealand.

³But having gone direct to Cambridge from battling German tanks, Eric might well have found resonant material in the "eugenics" half of Fisher's great work, for example: "Any great war will reveal, I believe, a great fund of latent heroism in the body of almost any people, though any great war must sensibly diminish this fund" (Fisher 1959: 265).

⁴In this portrait Darwin stands bare-headed, hat in hand. His expression is troubled but patient, as though he were beginning a long explanation to St Peter ...

References

Bishop, G. 2008: The real McKay. Otago University Press, Dunedin.

Fisher, R. 1959: The genetical theory of natural selection. 2nd edn. Dover Press.

Tee, G. J. 1980/1981: Charles Darwin's correspondents in New Zealand. Proceedings of the Australasian Association for the history, philosophy and social studies of science 12: 367-379.

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