

OBITUARY

B. H. N. Teague

Bernard Teague, a long-standing member of the Society, died in May at the age of 78 years.

Bernard was born and educated in Feilding and in his early years he worked as a telegraph messenger, transferring later to Stratford and Mangaweka. He had already experienced an urge to give some time to Church work and before reaching Mangaweka he had preached at churches in Feilding, Halcombe, Midhirst, Mangaweka, Ohingaiti, and Rangiwhia. He then applied for a position as Methodist home missionary. In this capacity he was in Murchison when the big earthquake occurred and he was called on to officiate at burial services.

He shifted to Wairoa in the early 1930s through his church work, but there he decided to become a nurseryman, and he managed the Flowerland Nursery and a shop in Wairoa.

After his death the *Daily Telegraph* described him as a "noted historian, naturalist, and churchman", and as a "top naturalist". He was all that and was also very keen on the work of the Historic Places Trust and on recording historic trees in New Zealand.

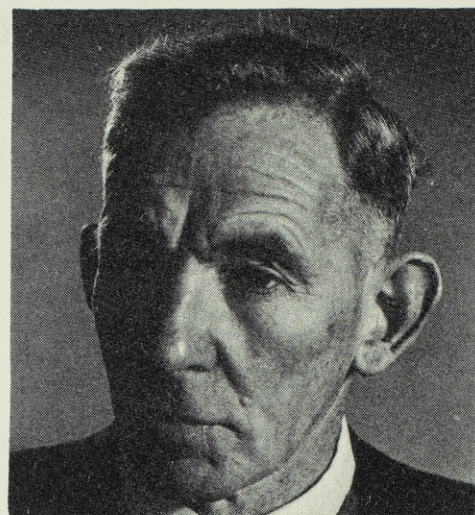
When he was young his mother encouraged him to get to know the country. Rangi-tikei, like many other places in New Zealand in those days, was overrun with thousands of rabbits, which he used to go after, and during his tramps he learned to love the birds and the bush. He described how hearing his first bellbird seemed to open a new world for him.

After his move to Wairoa he spent much time in the Ureweras, becoming an accomplished bushman and a friend of the Maoris living in those hills; in fact he acquired such a sound knowledge of the country and its people that he was able to contribute short stories and articles to some 30 publications as well as writing for *Forest and Bird*. Usually he wrote under the nom de plume of "Will Wandafar".

It is understandable that Bernard, in tramping and climbing over most of the Ureweras, would acquire an urge to do everything he could to have the region turned into a national park. It is understandable also that he found in the Society a practical organisation through which to work to bring this urge to fruition.

At a public meeting called by the Society in Wellington in the early 1950s he spoke of the need to preserve the Urewera. In the subsequent campaign he was supported by Miss Rucroft (now Mrs Briffault). With the good will and encouragement of the Minister of Lands, Hon. E. Corbett, who was a keen native forest lover, the Society pressed for the preservation of Urewera in its natural state. Before Mr Corbett left office he was able to tell the Society that 119 000 acres of the Urewera would be declared a national park. Gradually the area was increased until today Urewera National Park has an area of half a million acres.

Bernard, Miss Rucroft, and Ernie Corbett each in turn was awarded the Loder Cup for



Mr Teague.

work in the conservation of New Zealand flora, including the setting aside for posterity of the Urewera National Park.

Bernard Teague was the first chairman of the Wairoa Branch and remained chairman for several years. He was a member of the council for many years and was responsible for the Society setting up the Sanderson Memorial Address. One of his projects was the plan to set up annual camps for Society members, and he organised and ran camps year after year. Only a few days before his death he was planning camps for families with children, camps which could be run cheaply to allow more children to take part.

He was always interested in his district's activities and was a member of the Wairoa Borough Council for 6 years. He was a foundation member of the Urewera National Park Board and remained a member until he reached the stipulated retiring age.

Bernard Teague was an outstanding *Forest and Bird* member; in fact by resolution of the council he was declared to be a distinguished life member. He will be missed, and the Society's sympathy goes to his wife, Thelma, and to his daughters, Rewa, Marilyn, and Bronwyn. ■