
T U H I N G A

Records of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

**VICTOR WILHELM LINDAUER
(1888-1964): HIS LIFE AND WORKS**

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**VICTOR WILHELM LINDAUER
(1888-1964): HIS LIFE AND WORKS**

Vivienne Cassie Cooper¹

ABSTRACT: Seaweeds of many kinds are common on New Zealand beaches, but their names and their uses have not become well known as quickly as those of other plants. Victor Lindauer (1888-1964) was not only a schoolteacher in Russell but also a world-famous phycologist, a scientist specialising in seaweeds. People from Stewart Island to the Far North sent seaweed samples to him. He identified and preserved these samples, which still exist as one collection in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Most New Zealanders are familiar with the name of Gottfried Lindauer and his fine portraits, especially of notable Maori people and their way of life late last century – meticulous documents of a race which appeared then to be on the decline. But how many are aware of the achievements of his son Victor, who is held by some of those who knew him to be an even greater achiever, in other fields as well as in art? It is no accident how we develop as human beings in this world today. We are moulded not only genetically by our parents, but also by the cul-

tural, social and economic climate into which we are born; and so it was with Victor Lindauer.

GOTTFRIED LINDAUER

Victor's father Gottfried, christened Bohumir, was born in Pilsen, Bohemia, in 1839. (Pilsen, one of the oldest Czech cities, was at that time part of the Austrian empire.) As a boy he used to draw and paint the flowers his father grew in the Bishop's nursery gardens. He was given artistic training in Vienna, where he painted ascetic religious subjects, far

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removed from the world of nature in which he grew up.

In those days all young men were required to serve in the Austrian army. After one such experience as a soldier the promising young artist decided to emigrate – ostensibly to America, actually to New Zealand. In 1874 he boarded the ship *Reichstag*, and after nearly three months he disembarked in Wellington, then Port Nicholson. He knew one word of English: “yes”.

Nothing daunted, he sailed across Cook Strait to Nelson, where he became more conversant with the English language. Two years in the South Island enabled him to paint a number of portraits of both white settlers and local Maori people. By 1876 he had travelled to Auckland, where his paintings made a considerable impact on the artistic world, and on one Henry Partridge in particular. Maori visitors were mesmerized by his faithful paintings of their kith and kin and would gaze for hours at portraits of those they knew. There was no lack of offers to sit as models, for two shillings and sixpence per session. (Partridge’s large collection of Lindauer paintings is now housed in the Auckland City Art Gallery.)

Gottfried’s marriage in 1879 to a Polish lady, Emilia Wipper, in Melbourne, ended abruptly with her death in 1880. He then returned to New Zealand, burying his grief in work and travel.

Through his friendship with the photographer Charles Camell, his skill increased in this relatively new discipline, which was to prove a boon in his professional sphere of portraiture. The ornithologist Walter Buller, another close friend, through associations with the Land

Court, particularly in the Hawkes Bay district, introduced him to suitable customers (Gordon *et al.*, 1985).

VICTOR LINDAUER

In 1885, Gottfried married Rebecca Petty, an English woman ten years his junior. After a trip in 1886 to display some of his paintings, they settled in Marton, where two sons were born in quick succession: Camell Partridge Lindauer in 1887 and Victor Wilhelm Lindauer in 1888.

In 1892, the family moved to a new home at Woodville, near Palmerston North. There, on a 10-acre block almost completely covered in native bush, the young Lindauers enjoyed not only the peace and security of a stable home life with caring parents but the new ideas and stimulation provided by a succession of distinguished visitors. Among them was the botanist and explorer William Colenso, a former missionary, who (for his scientific achievements) had been elected a fellow of the prestigious Royal Society in London. The environment was an ideal one in which to nurture talents of art, natural history and a love of one’s fellow human beings.

At 12, Victor sketched scenes and people he encountered on his family’s trip to Europe. The Eiffel Tower was recorded for posterity in his exercise book, still in the Lindauers’ possession. His inborn artistic ability was fostered further during their second family tour of parts of Europe; this time including Munich. In fact he later recounted to botany students at the University of Auckland that he studied at the same art school as Adolf Hitler.

About the same time Gottfried revisited his old haunts in Bohemia.

TEACHING AND MARRIAGE

Victor's teaching career began early. At 15 he taught youngsters at Woodville Primary School. Some of them were large enough to have felled him with a blow, as he was rather short in stature. From Woodville he journeyed to Napier, where he gained further experience as a teacher, and blossomed socially. War service called in 1916, and he caused his mother much consternation when he

volunteered for the Medical Corps. However he spent two years in this branch of the army and then made his way to the United States, where he acquired local culture in the form of fancy recipes (now unrecorded) and untidy living habits while boarding with "Uncle Toony and Ant Fred".

Teaching occupied him after his return to New Zealand. In 1923 he met and taught his future wife, Elsie May Lovell. A mature young lady for her 17 years, she announced to her disapproving parents

Fig. 1 – Victor Lindauer, the soldier. (Photograph of painting by Gottfried Lindauer.)



that she intended to marry Victor. They were married, despite all opposition, in 1927. Armed with a gift of £5 from Elsie's maternal grandfather, the newlyweds set out for Palmerston North to buy some furniture. But love of art triumphed over better judgement, and they returned to Woodville carrying a dinner set embellished with a classical Greek frieze (still owned by Victor's son Lynton). A packing case sufficed for a table – wealth was not essential for their happiness. Two bicycles, nicknamed 'Claude' and 'Angelina', served for transport. A new hobby occupied Victor's spare time: that of jewellery making. He melted down old rings brought to school by the children of Woodville School and crafted some choice ornaments.

As with all his hobbies like bookbinding, lino-cuts and potato-cuts, collecting lilies and cacti and pollinating pansies, he mastered the technique to near perfection. Painting continued to be a constant pastime, and the sheer pleasure of collecting things had already become an abiding passion.

Victor accompanied his mother, Rebecca Lindauer, on a trip to Panama on the *Hororata*, a trip which literally proved her downfall, as she fell and broke her hip and was in future confined to a wheelchair. Victor received £28 as payment for serving as ship's purser on the voyage: a long trip made even longer by the captain's requirement that passengers play bridge each night. Passengers who did not were made to pay a penalty. Thankfully disembarked at Panama, Victor collected a whole trunk full of seashells ... it is on record that they smelt

so unpleasant he passed through Customs without any trouble.

Back home, Elsie helped to clean the shells, which are now in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, as the Lindauer Collection of Shells from Panama.

FAMILY LIFE

Te Rehunga near Woodville was the next teaching post for Victor. His visits to school on his motorbike 'Aloysius' were punctuated by numerous breakdowns (on the part of the motorbike). Elsie was forever wondering where her husband was.

Victor's brother, an accomplished violinist, suffered from dropsy (Bright's Disease) and died in February 1928, causing the family much distress. Gottfried Lindauer had died in 1926, and Victor's mother, wheelchair bound, lived with the young Lindauers.

Rebe Elzina Lindauer entered the world in November 1929 in Woodville. In Victor's absence, Grandma (obviously not in charge of family finances) paid the local doctor 10 gold sovereigns – more than twice the amount Victor and Elsie had had for furniture when they started married life!

In January 1931, concerned for Grandma's health, the Lindauer family migrated north to the warmer climate of Russell in the Bay of Islands, just a few weeks before the Napier earthquake. Here Victor's collecting mania extended to mosses, lichens and even chitons on the rocky shore. The seaweed era was about to come.

Russell was the birthplace of the other three children: Claudia, in May 1932, Peter in January 1934, and Lynton in

January 1937. He was named Lynton Robert after the New Zealand phycologist Robert M. Laing, science master at Christchurch Boys' High School (Moore 1967).

SEAWEED MANIA

Peter Lindauer was only a year old when the quiet township of Russell was "invaded" by a group of nine enthusiastic phycologists, led by the indomitable Professor Josephine Tilden from the University of Minnesota in the United States. Their aim – to gather herbarium material, specimens to catalogue and preserve, of every seaweed they encountered – was scarcely appreciated by the local inhabitants of Russell.

Having departed hastily from the cramped quarters of a local doctor's rented house, they ran into Victor Lindauer on the wharf. As headmaster of Russell Primary School, he generously allowed them to use the school facilities, it being the Christmas holiday period.

At their invitation, Victor gladly joined the team; and so began the career of Lindauer the phycologist. Rebe, then six years old, tells the story in her own words:

"We had a marvellous time with them, but many times Mum wished they had never met. Four of the men in the party sat around our house cow and tried to milk her simultaneously. In the evening they would come over to the schoolhouse. Dad wouldn't let

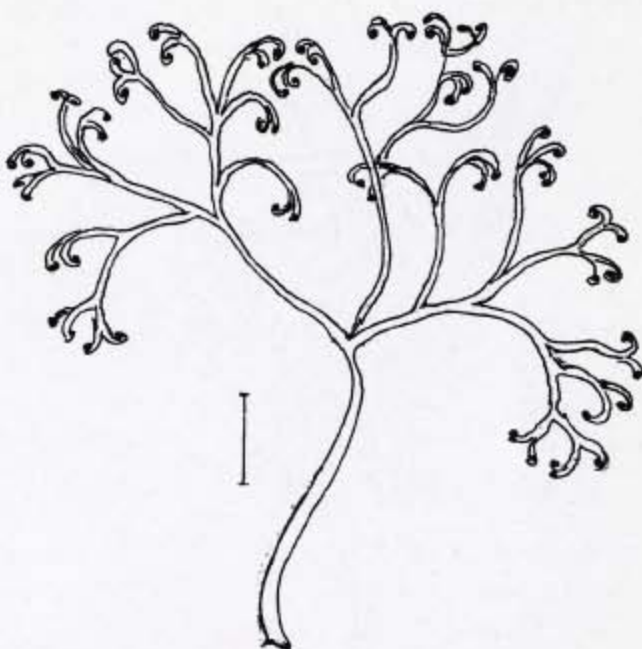


Fig. 2 – *Gigartina alveata*, chewed as an antidote to colds. Scale = 1 cm.

them work in the school at nights, as it was uninsured.

"One of them, Mr. Warnock, used to puff his pipe like Popeye, wiggling his ears and raising his eyebrows at the same time."

THE LINDAUER COLLECTION

Soon after their departure, Victor acted on the advice of Professor W. A. ("Uncle Bill") Setchell of the University of California at Berkeley and embarked on his own programme of collecting, pressing and identifying New Zealand seaweeds. He assembled the herbarium sheets in 'little bundles' – or 'fascicles' in the term that Lindauer (along with other botanists) used. Each member of his well-disciplined family was shown a specimen, and then ordered to scatter along the seashore

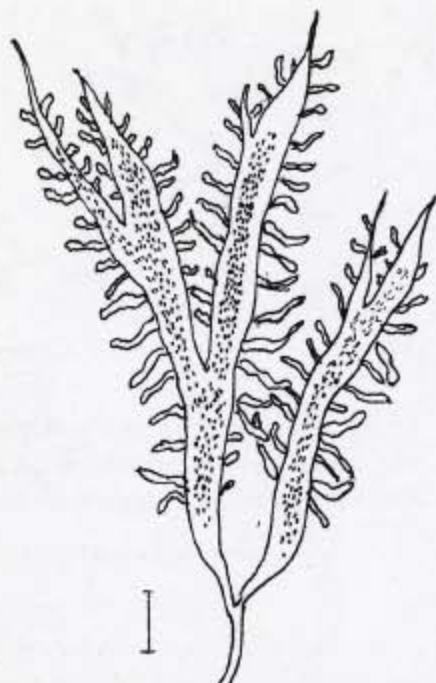


Fig. 3 – *Gigartina marginifera*, used in recipes.
Scale = 1 cm.

and gather up at least sixty samples of the same kind.

Elsie, loyal and helpful as always, coordinated the family's activities and typed the labels. By day, newspapers were dried in the open, anchored from the wind with stones; by night, operations continued indoors, under the quite inadequate light of an Aladdin lamp.

The older members of the family floated delicate fronds on to sheets of thick paper, and held up drying papers in front of the fire. Sometimes these would catch alight and fly up the chimney.

Victor, a half-smoked, ash-laden cigarette drooping from his mouth, officiated. Each member had their own dish of water in which to float the fragile speci-

mens. Arranging them took considerable skill. It was very frustrating to find the whole frond floating off just when it was all organized perfectly. Rebe recalls how she resented working on the seashore while her peers were lazily lolling on the beach soaking up sunshine. The deeply indented coastline around the sheltered shores of the Bay of Islands provided abundant niches for luxuriant growth of red, brown and green seaweeds, cast up in great quantities after an easterly gale.

Victor transferred his enthusiasm to his school children in Standards 5 and 6, and they delighted in combing beaches and rock pools on "nature study" outings. Not everyone

shared his love of such rambles, however. Some of the parents objected strongly, even petitioning against them, fortunately without result. Back in the classroom, while seated at his teacher's desk, Victor prepared an art book based on his seashore studies. Although submitted to the Education Department in Wellington it disappeared, never to be heard of again. There were no copies.

Others helped get specimens from deeper waters, including Alan Baker, a former director of the Museum of New Zealand, and Mabel Jamieson, a daughter of the lighthouse keeper at Cape Brett, who dived for a rare brown species known locally as "ginger whiskers" (*Sporochmus* sp.?). Southern forms were sent to Russell by Mr R. Gilpin from the Chatham Islands, Mrs Eileen Willa from Stewart

Island, Mrs O. Sansom from Southland, Miss Finlayson from Kaka Point, South Otago, and Mr L.E. Richdale from the Snares Islands (Cassie 1971). And so the fascicles continued to grow.

USES OF SEAWEED

About this time the New Zealand Government was undertaking a survey of the coastline for sources of the red alga *Pterocladia lucida*. This seaweed was a source of agar, the gelatine-like substance used widely in cooking and in laboratory preparations. And under wartime conditions, agar could no longer be imported from Japan. The whole family would comb the beaches for a *Pterocladia* hunt. The pay, at one shilling per pound of dry weight, was scant reward. It took a lot of dry weed to fill one sack, when trodden down by young feet.

At Russell School he taught Standards 2 to 6. Certain seaweeds were put to practical use. Dried specimens of *Gigartina alveata* were handed round the class each day at "seaweed time" and, as Elsie explained to the local branch of the Country Women's Institute, the children would all chew it. Colds vanished; until one year there was no *Gigartina alveata* to be found, and the parents complained that their offspring were succumbing to the current virus. Elsie chewed it for its therapeutic effects on her goitre. Years later she was to suffer serious side effects from a harmful over-dose of radioactive iodine.

Seaweed Jelly

Simmer a good handful of washed and dried seaweed (*Gigartina marginifera*) in a quart of water for 2-3 hours.

Add half an eggcupful of orange extract and sugar to taste.
Chill.

Another species, *Gigartina marginifera*, was used by Elsie Lindauer to make seaweed jelly and spanish cream. Here are her recipes. She explained that before being made into dessert the seaweed was dried in sacks in her hot water cupboard.

Victor's daughter Claudia records the use of another seaweed, *Ecklonia radiata*. Its long strap-like brown fronds make an excellent weather vane, becoming limp in damp weather. It can also be used as a cure for athlete's foot when rubbed between the toes.

FAREWELL TO THE FAR NORTH

Holidays for the Lindauer family during the 1930s were spent in driving round the coast from the Far North to Te Puke and back via Ninety Mile Beach, with the aid of their 1929 Chrysler. Again the emphasis was on seaweed collecting. Further disruption came in 1940 when they moved – by barge, not by car – from

Spanish Cream

Wash a good handful of dried seaweed (*gigartina marginifera*).

Simmer in a quart of water for 2-3 hours.

Add an equivalent quantity of milk, half a cup of sugar, and vanilla to flavour.

Bring back to boiling point and add to the lightly beaten yolks of 3 eggs.

Whip the whites until they are stiff and stir carefully into the custard mixture.

Pour into a wet mould and chill.

Russell to Awanui, complete with two cows, furniture and other animals.

War service called Victor to Kaeo, where he joined the National Reserve. The family split up: Rebe departed for her maternal grandparents' home in Woodville, while Elsie and the three younger children stayed in Awanui.

Victor returned after a year in the reserve, but to everyone's chagrin, he was transferred to a teaching post in Manga-

pehi, a small mining settlement in the heart of the King Country. No seaweeds! Aided by Elsie and Rebe, he struggled to teach the local miners' children, but there was little or no interest in the seashore.

Mercifully, he obtained another transfer, this time to Pihama in Taranaki. Coastal life became a reality once again, and with it the chance to become familiar with more wave-exposed seaweeds.

Pterocladia abounded, though transporting it up steep cliffs was a major effort.

RUSSELL AGAIN

Four years later, in 1947, the Lindauers returned to Uriti Bay, not far from Russell township. Victor upgraded his orchard, which had been a swamp in the 1930s, when he bought it. His sale of a section to the local RSA for a shilling highlighted his generous nature.

His reward: a photograph and a portrait of himself by Gottfried hanging in the club rooms.

AUCKLAND

At the invitation of Professor V.J. Chapman, in 1949, Victor joined the staff of the Botany Department of the University of Auckland (then Auckland University College) as a Senior Research Fellow, at the princely salary of £600. He was to investigate the taxonomy of the New Zealand seaweed flora, particularly the brown algae.

While there, he communicated his love of the subject to younger graduate students, among them Vivienne Dellow (now Vivienne Cassie Cooper), a PhD student studying the marine algal ecology of the Hauraki Gulf (published in 1955). Her knowledge of the algae increased greatly under Victor's benevolent guidance.

He was a source of inspiration to all who worked with him, especially on the biennial field trips for second- and third-year students which he hosted up north at Russell. Fun and collecting went hand in hand at those gatherings. An old hotel on the waterfront at Russell Beach provided accommodation which seemed quite luxurious to students accustomed to roughing it at Field Club camps.

In August 1949, Professor John H. Davis Jr. from Gainesville University, Florida, entered into the spirit of the algal foray, as did Dr. Margaret Naylor from the UK. We all enjoyed chanting "Where, oh where is dear Prof Davis? Way down yonder in the paw paw patch" and dancing "Strip the Willow" at the social gatherings in the evening, after a day of hard work collecting, drying, mounting and recording our treasures from seashore and mangrove swamp.

Victor's benign presence presided over all, and again – as in the days of Professor Josephine Tilden – the windows of the schoolhouse were decorated with hundreds of drying herbarium sheets.

PACIFIC SCIENCE CONGRESS

The summer of 1949 was the occasion of the Seventh Pacific Science Congress, held at Auckland and Christchurch. It was the first major international meeting

of scientists in New Zealand after the second world war.

Enthusiasm for New Zealand's natural sciences ran high – not least among staff and students of marine algae at the University of Auckland (then Auckland University College). For young Masters and PhD students as well as for Victor Lindauer, the chance to meet "the literature", famous names like Professors Carl Skottsberg, Gilbert M. Smith and G.F. Papenfuss, was an experience of a lifetime. (See Figure 4, which shows the algal symposium participants.)

For these men, too, it was a release to travel to the Southern Hemisphere and shed the shackles which had been imposed on their academic activities during wartime. Field trips to Rangitoto and Piha during the Congress turned out to be disastrously wet, and visitors learned what Auckland downpours in February can be like. Somehow, professors soaked to the skin lost some of their dignity. After a *conversazione* in the Botany Department, European visitors were distressed to see the appalling waste of the food which had turned mouldy on the laboratory bench overnight in the ghastly humidity.

But the impact of the meetings helped Victor and the students to persevere with their algal studies. As is so often the case, it seemed easier to communicate with colleagues from overseas than with one's peers in New Zealand. Victor and Papenfuss in particular were like two young schoolboys, jumping for joy at each fresh discovery.

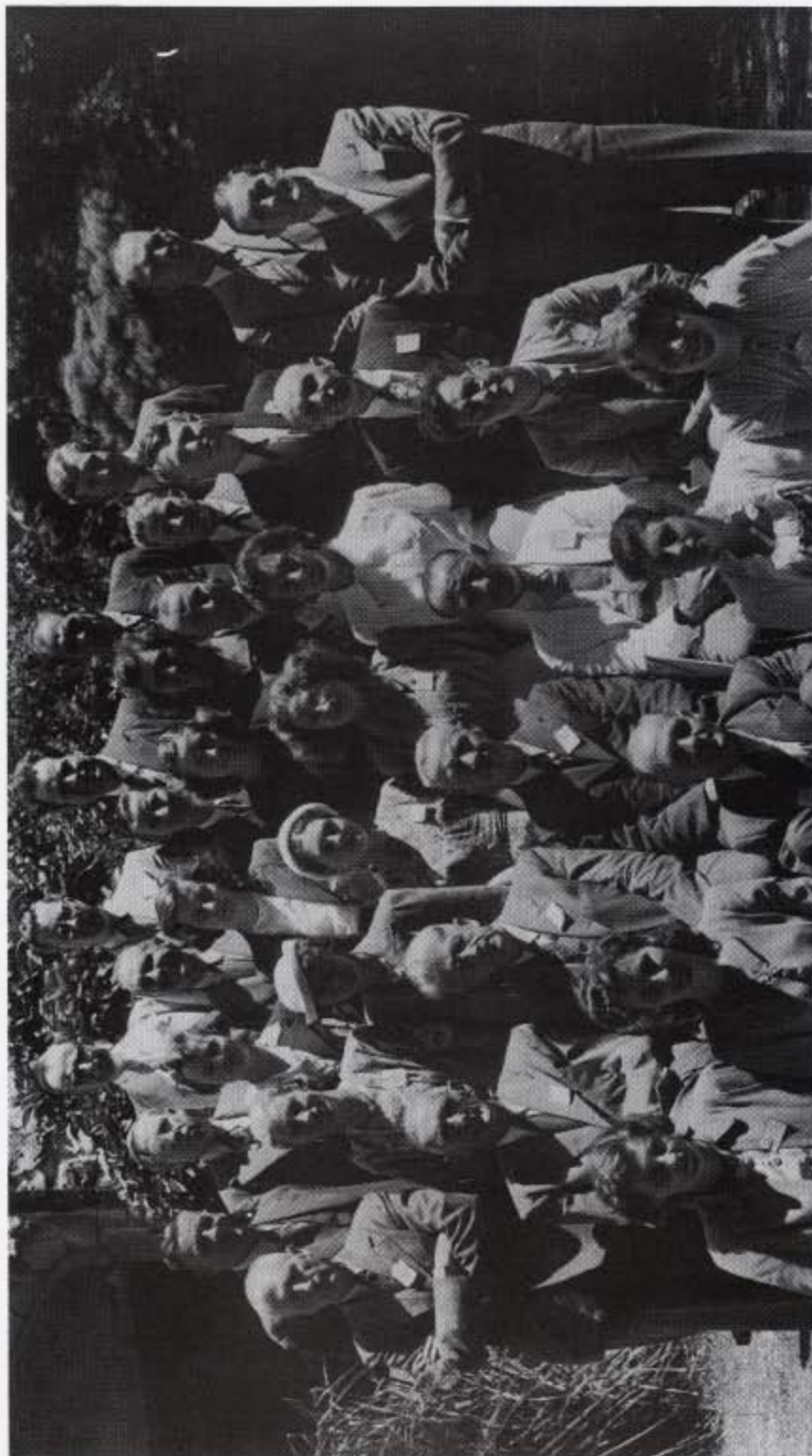


Fig. 4 – Participants in the Algal Symposium, 7th Pacific Science Congress, Auckland; February 1949. Left to right, front row: M. Ambler, [typiste], G. Bayliss, J. Peebles, A. Crawford. 2nd row: G. Smith, C. Skottsberg, W. Oliver, H. Lam, V. Chapman. 3rd row: H. Allan, L. Moore, M. Crookes, N. Adams, V. Dellow, J. Hastings, G. Papenfuss, E. Christophersen. 4th row: V. Lindauer, N. Wright, M. Lancaster, R. de Berg, L. Sussex, J. Carnahan, J. Gibbs. 5th row: E. Walker, P. Dansereau, B. Womersley, S. Baker, R. Davison. Back row: R. Heim, N. Burgess, R. Fosberg, E. Godley, R. Mirams.

THE FASCICLES: ALGAE NOVAE-ZELANDICAE EXSICCATAE

No great work is ever accomplished quickly, and usually there are many unsung heroes and heroines who help to achieve the final goal. Such was indeed the case with the assemblage of the fascicles. Over a period of twenty-five years and under Victor's guidance, his family and others including older Russell school children at Russell and Pihama collected, sorted, mounted, pressed, labelled and identified more than 20,000 specimens. Of the southern helpers, Mrs. Willa from Half Moon Bay, Stewart Island, gave unstinting support. Victor spent three weeks there, and in all she provided him with sets of 85 out of the 350 species in the fascicles.

Within each fascicle, the algae are not arranged taxonomically; instead, they represent a cross-section of the wide range of the seaweeds found in New Zealand waters: greens, browns, reds and blue-greens.

Between 1935 and 1953, fourteen fascicles were assembled, each containing twenty-five or more different species. Sixty copies were made of each fascicle, and these were distributed to museums and universities in widely different parts of the world, at 25 shillings per fascicle.

The photographs here (Figures 5, 6 and 7) show samples from the fascicles, displaying the dried specimens and their original labels. More recent names of seaweeds in the fascicles are being presented in a forthcoming publication (Nelson, in prep).

The name of Lindauer became a byword among taxonomic phycologists. Before long, the mailbox at Uriti Bay became inundated with correspondence from specialists like Drs F. Borgesen, E. Yale Dawson, F. Drouet, J. Feldmann, G.T. Hollenberg, H. Kylin, T. Leving, Lily Newton, G.F. Papenfuss, W.A. Setchell, P. Skuja, G.M. Smith, H.B.S. Womersley, Y. Yamada, Valerie May-Jones and F. Perrin.

Illness assailed Victor at 65, in the form of a stroke, severe enough to curtail any future phycological endeavours. He died in 1964 at the age of 76, and this great loss was felt by his family and all who knew him. Generous to a fault, he would always help those in need.

His concern for the welfare of children and impecunious students bore witness to his kind and understanding nature, even though, as his daughter Rebe acknowledged, his genius was hard to live with at times. As she has stated:

“He was a person who excelled in everything he attempted. Never the half-hearted attempt, never the shoddy effort. He was always interested in and proud of his family.”

Many years later Elsie died quietly in Hamilton, but she was buried, as she wished, beside Victor in the RSA cemetery at Russell.

PUBLISHED WORKS

Not long after the departure of the Tilden group for Minnesota, Victor began to produce scientific papers for publication, mainly in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand*. One in Volume 67 (1938) concerned *Champia laingii*, a small iridescent red alga inhabiting rock



Samples from the *Algae Novae-Zelandicae Exsiccatae*:

Fig. 5 (top left) – *Carpophyllum maschalocarpum*.

Fig. 6 (right) – *Sporochnus pedunculatus*.

Fig. 7 (bottom left) – *Pterocladia lucida*.

pools, and another in Volume 69 (1939) discussed the tetrasporic form of *Gigartina alveata*.

A note in Volume 75 (1945) drew attention to the peculiar "rooting" form of *Ecklonia brevipes*. The year 1946 saw production of a paper with Professor Setchell on the little-known red alga *Lenormandia coronata*; and in 1947 he published his annotated list of the brown seaweeds known at that time from New Zealand. Additions to the marine algae of New Zealand (Volume 73) were followed by his paper for the Seventh Pacific Science Congress on some New Zealand algal confusions (*Proceedings of the Seventh Pacific Science Congress* 5). A descriptive review of New Zealand brown algae came later (Volume 85, 1957). Further species were described in 1960 (*Revue algologique* 3).

After Victor's stroke, Professor Chapman and Miriam Aiken undertook to edit his unpublished records of New Zealand Phaeophyceae. Based on Victor's own work, this appeared in Volume 3 of *Nova Hedwigia* in 1961. Together with hastily assembled photos and drawings, it comprised an account of 77 genera and 126 species, excluding varieties and forms.

Thus Victor Lindauer laid the foundation for future work on this important section of the marine algal flora of New Zealand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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