

Millicent Amiel Baxter (1888 – 1984)

Millicent Amiel Macmillan Brown, of Scottish and Welsh descent, was born on 8 January 1888 in Christchurch, New Zealand, the elder daughter of John Macmillan Brown, a founding professor at Canterbury College, and his wife Helen, née Connon, then principal of Christchurch Girls' High School. They lived at Holmbank, a five-acre property in Wairarapa Terrace, Fendalton, and helped by a gardener, planted trees, grew fruit and vegetables and kept animals. Millicent was tutored at home, and from a young age was taken on trips to the foothills, including the Castle Hill run of naturalist John Enys. After Arthur Dendy arrived in 1893 as professor of biology at Canterbury, the young Dendy children became close friends. Her mother became ill on a family trip to Europe and died in 1903, when Millicent was fifteen years old.

In 1905, after disappointing scholarship exam results, Millicent lived with relatives in Sydney and attended the Presbyterian Ladies' College. She completed her BA in Latin, French and German at the University of Sydney in 1908 and undertook further study at Cambridge and at Halle, Germany. War broke out as she returned home, and she did the usual women's patriotic war work. In mid 1918 a copy of a letter written by Archibald Baxter, a conscientious objector in France, to his parents in Otago, moved her to become a pacifist and later to meet him. They married on 12 February 1921 at the Dunedin Registrar's Office and farmed at Kuri Bush near Brighton for nine years, became parents of Terence (1922) and James (1926), and explored the South Island on family holidays. When they sold the

farm and moved to Brighton, Archie went shearing. Macmillan Brown's death in 1935 left Millicent an annuity, enabling them to travel more extensively, and in 1936 they made contact with international pacifists in Europe. During World War II they focused on New Zealand peace movements.

Millicent's love of the mountains and interest in plants came to the fore in the 1950s when she joined pacifist friends Jim and Elaine Gill on excursions into the hills. She joined the Dunedin Naturalists Field Club in 1956 and organised the group's annual trips from 1962 to 1975. On one outing Archie drew her attention to an unusual plant, which she then grew on in her alpine garden. Unsure of its identity, she sent Dr John Dawson specimens, and in 1967 he described and named *Gingidium enysii* var. *baxteri* "after Mrs M Baxter, who sent me living material of the variety from a Dunstan Range plant growing in her garden". It is now recognised as a separate species, *Gingidia baxterae*.

Archie died in 1970. Despite the disparity in their backgrounds and continual harassment by officials and locals for their commitment to anti-militarism, it had been a loving and enduring marriage. Millicent moved to Kaikorai Valley, closer to Dunedin, where she lived alone and remained active for many more years, travelling to England to see her sister, and to the mountains in northern Italy, when in her late eighties. Hospitalised with a broken hip, she died at the age of 96, on 3 July 1984.

Gingidia baxterae

Gingidia is a small, mainly New Zealand genus revised by John Dawson for seven species previously included in *Anisotome* or *Angelica*. *Gingidia baxterae* is a small delicate herb rather like the more widespread *Anisotome aromatica* except the bruised leaves are strongly aniseed-scented and the thin leaflets are glabrous with the terminal one similar in size to the 3–7 pairs of laterals. It is a minor species of moist sites in snow or blue tussock grassland and subalpine scrub on the Goulard Downs, Nelson, with a large gap to Central and eastern Otago and northern Southland, and is naturally uncommon.



PHOTO: David Lyttle