

Lucy May Cranwell (1907 – 2000)

Lucy Cranwell was born on 7 August 1907 and grew up in West Auckland on her parents' Henderson orchard. After attending her local primary school and Epsom Girls' Grammar School, where she showed prowess in both sports and academic subjects, she continued her studies at Auckland University College. She took an active part in student life and in 1926 formed a syndicate with four others to purchase 7 hectares of steep coastal land near Anawhata; they built a small hut, and it became the base for many stimulating University Field Club weekends. In 1929 Lucy graduated with an MA in Botany, with a thesis on epiphytes of the Waitakere Ranges, and was appointed botanist at the Auckland Museum.



Libertia cranwelliae

Libertia is a Southern Hemisphere iris genus of 15 species, with seven species in New Zealand now recognised. *Libertia cranwelliae* is one of three New Zealand irises described and named after female botanists in 2002. An endemic herb somewhat similar to mikoikoi (*Libertia ixioides*), plants consist of stiff leafy fans crowded or emerging at intervals from far-spreading horizontal, bright yellow stolons; leaves are inclined to turn yellow when exposed to full sun. Three-petaled white flowers with three central yellow stamens appear in spring, followed by large, barrel-shaped fruit capsules that ripen gradually to release globose to angular orange-brown seeds. Recently rediscovered in the wild at one site near East Cape, it grows in coastal forest on cliff faces, in seepages and on stream banks.

During the 1930s Lucy with her friend and fellow botanist Lucy Moore – “the two Lucys” – carried out fieldwork in remote parts of New Zealand, including the Poor Knights and Hen and Chickens islands. They published their results in at least six joint papers, and during their travels forged lasting friendships with most other botanists in New Zealand. Miss Cranwell’s long-time study of fossil pollen began in 1935 when Professor Lennart von Post, founder of pollen analysis, invited her to Stockholm to study peat samples collected in Otago and Southland by Swedish glaciologist Carl Caldenius. In 1938 she was awarded a six-month Bishop Museum (Honolulu) Fellowship that allowed her to study Hawaiian montane bogs. The two Lucys made their last New Zealand expedition together in the summer of 1939-40, to the southern bogs from which Caldenius had collected his samples.

On 30 September 1943 Lucy married Captain (later Major) Samuel Watson Smith, who was stationed in Auckland with the US Army Air Forces. After they moved to the United States in February 1944 she was usually known as Lucy Cranwell Smith. After his discharge Wat worked at the Peabody Museum and Lucy in the Botany Department of Harvard University, from 1944–1950. Their son Benjamin was born in 1947. When the family moved to Tucson in 1950, Lucy became a research affiliate in the Department of Geosciences at the University of Arizona, a post she held until her death on 8 June 2000, at the age of 92.

As well as the academic side of botany, Lucy was active in the conservation of natural areas she visited. She set up a Native Wildflower Circle for children in 1933–34, and in 1937 founded the Auckland Botanical Society. She wrote two books: *The Botany of Auckland*, a revision of the one first published with Arnold Wall in 1936, and *Food is Where you Find it*, a Museum best seller issued to troops in the South Pacific. Her many awards included the Loder Cup in association with the Auckland Museum (1937), the Hector Medal for research on New Zealand pollen (1954), and honorary membership of prestigious New Zealand and overseas scientific institutions. A steep track in the Waitakere Ranges, four fossil plant taxa and at least eight living plant taxa (three Hawaiian dicotyledons, and a New Zealand lichen, two marine algae, a grass and an iris) have been named in her honour.