

Elsie Smith's Stewart Island orchids



Compiled by Ian St George

Cover

Old Mill Creek, Stewart Island, 1926. Watercolour by EKA (Elsie) Smith—
“I loved this one so much when I was young that Mother gave it to me.
It was painted on one of those hazy days in a long dry summer & Old
Mill Creek looked *exactly* like that” (Judith Robinson née Smith).

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watercolours and drawings
1930 to 1960

compiled by
Ian St George



Number 18 in the New Zealand Native Orchid Group's *Historical Series*,
Wellington, 2012. ISSN 0114-5568

Acknowledgements

Following publication in the Botanical Society of Otago's *Bulletin* (2012: 65) of an article on Cedric and Elsie Smith, I approached its author, Mary Anne Miller of Dunedin, who contacted Mrs Judith Robinson, the Smith's daughter, on my behalf. I met Mrs Robinson in Dunedin, and she agreed to allow the Group to publish her mother's watercolours of the NZ native orchids she had painted on Stewart Island. Among them are a few by Judith herself.

Elsie Smith

Elizabeth Keith Annand Smith (née Simmers) 1896–1870 was born in Ashburton and from age three until her marriage in 1921, lived in Timaru. Cedric and Elsie spent their honeymoon at Stewart Island, a place Cedric had loved since school and university holidays.

A few years later they returned there to live, Cedric on a full war pension for disabilities suffered during WW I. Each had been interested in natural history, and when their children travelled away to school they began to specialise.



Cedric and Elsie Smith, Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Is, early 1920s.

Cedric worked on the orchids, of which he sent Dan Hatch at least forty specimens, now in the Hatch Herbarium at Auckland Museum. Dan named a variant of what we now regard as *Thelymitra cyanea* for him, calling it *Thelymitra venosa* var. *cedricsmithii*. Elsie painted the orchids. Cedric sent specimens to their daughter Judith, at school in Invercargill, and she too painted them.

Cedric would later turn to mosses and lichens, but soon all his energies were concentrated into organising and preparing

the Rakiura Museum, of which he was the founding honorary curator.

Elsie specialised in shells, and made a representative collection for the Museum; she turned to, and became an expert in, the small shells of southern New Zealand. Her “Studies of the Stewart Island Mollusca”,¹ was intended to be the first of a series, but after Cedric’s death in 1963 she could not continue. In 1965 she donated her research collection to the Dominion Museum (now Te Papa). Shortly afterwards she left the Island.

Bruce Marshall, malacologist at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, which now houses her collection, says it is by far the most comprehensive collection of Stewart Island Mollusca ever made; she also described several new species.

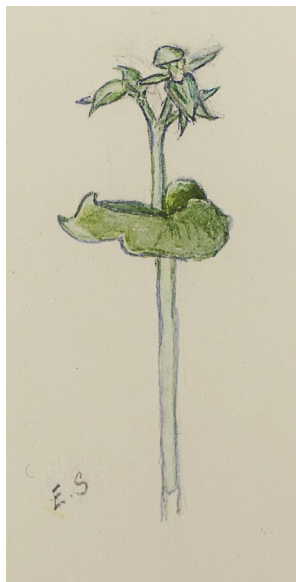
Her daughter Judith Robinson wrote, “Elsie was an intelligent and astute woman, though rather self-effacing. She was fondly regarded by many of the locals as ‘a bit dotty’—and she worked on this. She once wrote to me, ‘If one can combine *a very strong interest* in some subject with a reputation for *mild eccentricity* one can get away with a great deal!’ She had a delicious sense of humour.

“I like to remember her working at her microscope, sorting shell sand using her watercolour brushes and licking a point on a fine one to lift and transfer a specimen to a glass tube with cotton wool stuffed in the ends.”

1. Smith EKA 1962. Studies of the Stewart Island mollusca. No. 1. *Records of the Dominion Museum* 4 (5).

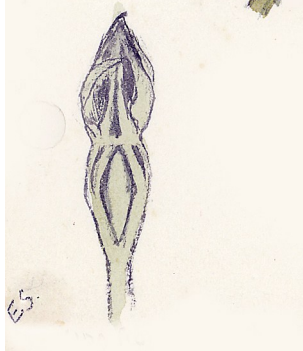


Elsie Smith in 1960



Acianthus sinclairii

Apparently absent from Otago and Southland
except for Stewart Island.



Chiloglottis cornuta

The upper drawing is annotated "Chiloglottis Miss Willa.
Jan 21/33."



Corybas cheesemanii

Apparently absent from Otago and Southland
except for Stewart Island.



Drymoanthus flavus

Annotated "6m miro tree with lichen.
Flower green inside yellow outside. C. Smith 21.12.45."
This predates the formal description by 50 years.



Earina autumnalis



Earina mucronata

Annotated "Possibly *E. aestivalis*".



Gastrodia cunninghamii



Microtis unifolia* and *Prasopphyllum colensoi



Nematoceras acuminatum

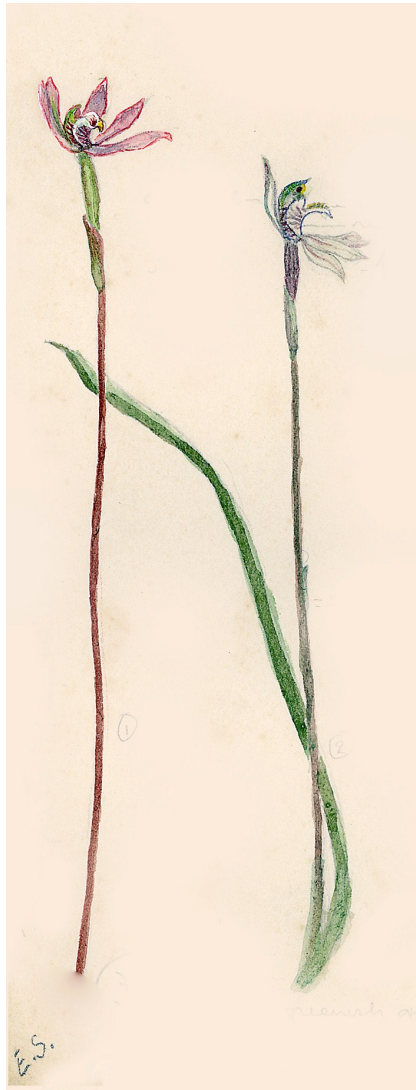


Nematoceras macranthum



***Nematoceras trilobum* agg.**

The upper drawing is annotated "July 31st. 1940 (Mrs Willa)."



Petalochilus spp.

Probably *P. variegatum* and *P. chlorostylum*.
Annotated "Pryse's Peak about 1000 ft January 1933.
Petalochilus? Trans 56: 16."



Singularitybas oblongus



Stegastyla lyallii



Thelymitra cyanea

This was the plant that ED Hatch described as
Thelymitra venosa var. *cedricsmithii*.



Thelymitra cyanea



Thelymitra formosa (column)



Thelymitra hatchii

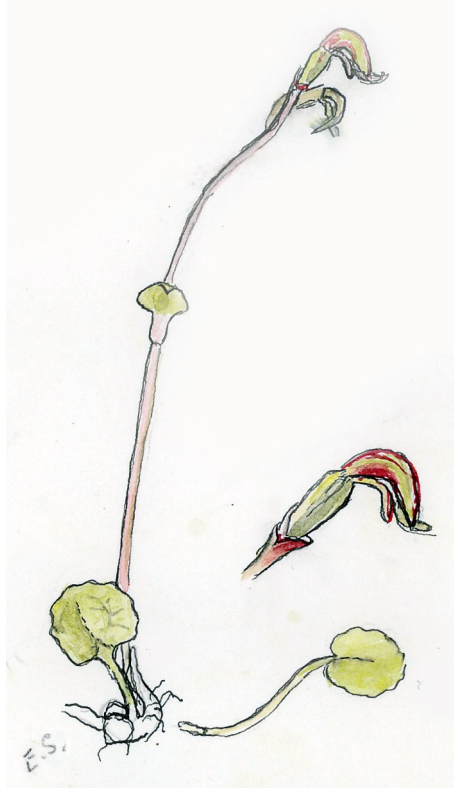
Annotated "17/2/47."



Thelymitra hatchii



Thelymitra longifolia



Townsonia viridis

Annotated "Top of highest hill on the way from Masons Bay to Doughboy. 11/60 D. Leask. In swamp. Inconspicuous, rather dingy looking."



Winika cunninghamii



Stewart Island *Pterostylis* spp.

Watercolours by Judith Robinson (née Smith) of (clockwise from top left) *P. montana*, *P. sp?*, *P. graminea* and *P. australis*.



Waireia stenopetala

by Judith Smith.



Aporostylis bifolia

by Judith Smith.

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