

Henry Hammersley Travers (1844 – 1928)

Henry Hammersley Travers, the only son of William Thomas Locke Travers and his wife Jane, née Oldham, was born in Hythe, Kent, England, on 26 August 1844. His father, after serving in the British Foreign Legion, studied law in London, was called to the Bar around 1844 and over the next five years practised first at Chipping Camden in the Cotswolds and then at Evesham, Gloucestershire. In July 1849 William and Jane Travers and their two children left on the *Kelso* for New Zealand, and arrived at Nelson on 4 November 1849.

Henry was educated at Nelson College, and sharing his father's interest in natural history, explored and collected plant material in much of the Nelson and Marlborough regions with him. Tracing the source of the Wairau River in the Spenser Mountains, William Travers named tributaries in the upper valley after members of his family; Henry River undoubtedly commemorates his son. In 1863, on learning that little scientific work had been done on the Chatham Islands, William entrusted the task to Henry and undertook to fund all expenses.

During his six months 1863–64 on Chatham and Pitt Islands Henry Travers studied the landforms, described the appearance and living conditions of the Moriori and collected many plant, bird, lizard, insect and rock specimens. On Pitt Island he enjoyed the hospitality of the Hunt family. Frederick Hunt, interested in natural history, joined Travers on some excursions, and one of the island's special plants, *Brachyglottis huntii*, was named in his honour. After Travers' return, the plant specimens were sent to Melbourne, and from them Ferdinand Mueller compiled and published *Vegetation of the Chatham Islands* (1864), describing 87 species, including eight that were new. The specimens remain in the National Herbarium of Victoria.

On a second six-month trip in 1871, possibly on behalf of the Colonial Museum, Travers extended his earlier research, collecting many more plants and examples of endemic birds, two of which, the Chatham Island rail and fernbird, are now extinct. Henry Travers' connection with the Chatham Islands is commemorated in the scientific names of a speargrass (*Aciphylla traversii*) and bamboo-rush (*Sporodanthus traversii*), the black robin (*Petroica traversii*), spade-toothed whale (*Mesoplodon traversii*), a longhorn beetle, a weevil, a fossil scallop and a fossil brachiopod (lamp shell). The Chatham Island geranium was named after his father, and the Chatham Island akeake (*Olearia traversiorum*) was named after both father and son.

Henry Travers married Ida Jane Smith of Christchurch in 1869, and over the next decade three daughters and two sons were born. Henry was admitted to the Bar as a lawyer in 1876 and practised in Wellington, where he experimented with growing native plants and established a successful garden. However, he changed his lifestyle around 1900 for a 150-acre grazing and general agricultural farm at Paraparaumu. He made trips to Stephens Island in 1895 and 1903 in search of the near-extinct Lyall's wren, and to the subantarctic islands in 1890 and 1894. He died in 1928, and his wife Ida in 1937.



Aciphylla traversii

Created by J R and G Forster in 1775, *Aciphylla* ('sharp leaf') is a genus of about 40 mainly alpine species in New Zealand and a few in the Australian Alps and Tasmania. They are commonly known as speargrass or wild spaniard. *Aciphylla traversii* is a stout tussock-like herb up to 80 cm tall, with rosettes of stiff leaves divided into long narrow sharp-pointed segments. Flower stems up to 1 metre tall, with rounded or open clusters of flowers, male and female on separate plants, occur from January to June. Endemic to the Chatham Islands, it is found mainly in open sites in sandy/peaty soils dominated by low bracken, umbrella fern and shrubs.