

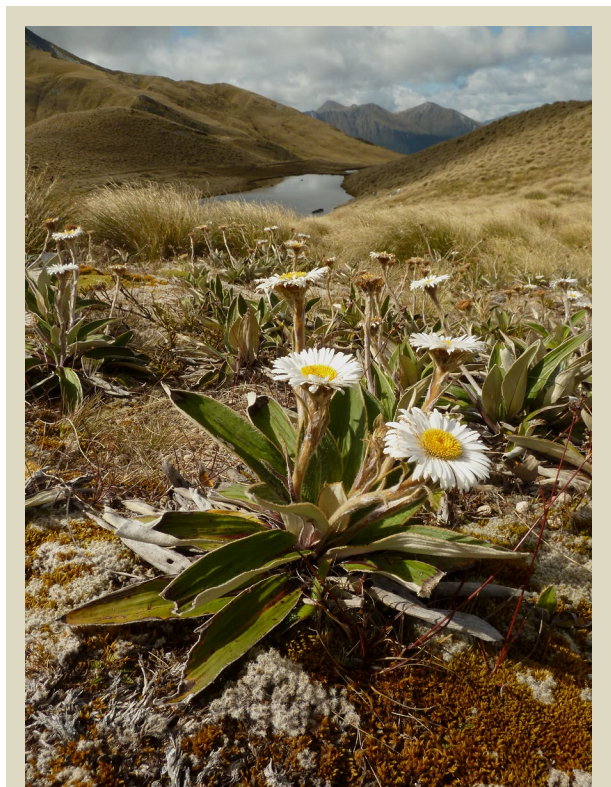
William Thomas Locke Travers (1819 – 1903)

William Thomas Locke Travers, the son of Boyle Travers, an army officer, and his wife Caroline Brockman, was born at Castleview, County Limerick, Ireland, on 19 January 1819. His father retired in France and William completed his education at St Servan's College, Saint Malo, when he was nearly 17. He joined the British Foreign Legion in 1835, and was decorated for his service in the Spanish Carlist Wars. When hostilities ceased he studied law in England; he was admitted to the Bar in about 1844, and practised at Chipping Camden and later at Evesham, Gloucestershire. He married Jane Oldham at Cork, Ireland, in 1843, and in 1849 William and Jane Travers and their two children immigrated to New Zealand on the *Kelso*, arriving at Nelson on 4 November.

Travers continued his profession in Nelson, Christchurch and Wellington. He also served as a magistrate in Nelson, and spasmodically between 1856 and 1878 as a member of the House of Representatives. However, his reputation in New Zealand was made outside politics. In the 1850s, with his son Henry, he explored the Nelson region, penetrating the upper Waiau valley and naming tributaries after members of his family. The geographical distribution of plants particularly interested him; he collected grasses and alpine herbs in Nelson, Marlborough and Canterbury, carefully noting their altitude, and sent specimens to J D Hooker at Kew.

He was a fellow of the Linnean Society, a founder of the New Zealand Institute, and helped establish the Wellington Botanic Garden. He published many articles on botany, ornithology, geology and ethnology, and in 1889 a travel book, *From New Zealand to Lake Michigan*. He was a skilled photographer, and his work is now much sought after. Three years after the death of his wife in 1888, he married Theodosia Leslie Barclay, at Wellington. He continued to practise law in Wellington until his death, as the result of a tram accident, on 23 April 1903.

Ferdinand Mueller dedicated his 1864 *Vegetation of the Chatham Islands* to William Travers, acknowledging his "generosity and high-minded zeal for scientific research" that enabled his son, Henry Travers, to spend six months exploring the Chathams, studying the history of the people and collecting plants. The 129 species sent to the Melbourne Museum formed the basis of Mueller's work. Hooker named the shrub genus *Traversia* after William Travers, and a number of species, including the striking mountain daisy *Celmisia traversii*, also commemorate him. The Chatham Island akeake (*Olearia traversiorum*) is named after both father and son.



Celmisia traversii

The large Australasian *Celmisia* genus ranks with snow tussocks as being one of the most characteristic and important groups in the alpine vegetation. *Celmisia traversii* is a handsome and distinctive species, with large thick leaves that are hairless and dark green above, but covered by a soft, velvety rust-brown felt of hairs below, and a band of longer hairs forming a margin around the edge. Midribs and leaf stalks are purple. During December and January rusty velvet flower stalks appear from the centre of the plant, contrasting with the white-rayed heads. It has an unusual distribution, occurring in low-alpine moist sites in tussock grassland and herbfield, in Northwest Nelson and in Fiordland.