

Samuel Delabere Barker (1848 – 1901)

Samuel Barker, the second son of Dr Alfred Charles Barker and his wife Emma, née Bacon, was born at Rugby, England, on 6 February 1848. When Sam was two years old, his father came to New Zealand with his wife and three young sons “to purchase land and be the first doctor among the colonists”. As surgeon on the emigrant ship *Charlotte Jane*, Dr Barker received free passage and a salary. The family landed at Lyttelton in December 1850 and three months later their first daughter was born in their Christchurch tent home. Tragically, Emma died in 1858, five weeks after the birth of their eighth child.



Hebe barkeri

Hebe barkeri, also known as *Veronica barkeri*, Barker's koromiko and Chatham Islands tree hebe, grows to tree size – 10 metres tall. It often begins life as an epiphyte on tree fern trunks, especially when under pressure from animal browsing. Leaves are pale apple-green, with narrow bases that do not wrap around the stem; leaf buds and young leaves have fine downy margins and midrib. Small pale lilac flowers fading to white appear from December to March; fruit from January to April. Endemic to the Chathams Islands, *Hebe barkeri* grows in forest and scrub. It was once widespread, but has been reduced to a few remnants, due to fire and clearance for farming, and browsing by livestock and feral animals.

Sam attended Christ's College from 1854 to 1864, and is almost certainly the Master Barker who presented bird-skins and eggs to the fledgling Canterbury Museum in the early 1860s. Dr Barker, concerned about the youthful activities and academic ability of his sons, urged the two older boys to start farming his land at Ohapi. In 1869 Sam left the farm and worked briefly on Sealy's survey at Oxford, before joining the National Bank in Timaru. The following year he was sent to the West Coast to buy gold for the bank.

In 1873 he sailed to the Chatham Islands where he visited his friend Edward Chudleigh at Wharekauri and stayed a week with Frederick Hunt on Pitt Island, photographing what were to become historic records of the family. On receiving news of his father's sudden death on 20 March he returned with Chudleigh, and on 12 August they left for England and Europe. After an adventurous African expedition, Barker arrived home in May 1876. In October 1878 he married Frances Harriet Lean in Christchurch. They rented a farm, and built near Temuka a house they called Kynnersley, an old family name. In 1886 they returned to Christchurch where Sam became librarian to the Supreme Court.

Sam Barker had an interest in botany, and was a native plant enthusiast. When the Christchurch Beautifying Association was formed in 1897, he became a committee member. He designed, planted and attended to one of its earliest works, the garden officially called Barkers Avenue, along the northern side of the Avon. It was planted almost exclusively with New Zealand plants. He liked to plant authentic material, and looked for unusual species for his garden, Te Kouka, near the botanic gardens. One of his finds in 1898 was a prostrate bush lawyer, which Cockayne described in 1910 as *Rubus barkeri*. Another was a tall shrub on the Chathams, where his younger brother Jack had purchased the Kaingaroa Station. Cockayne named this *Veronica (Hebe) barkeri*. Also in 1898, Kirk described an uncommon South Island alpine daisy, naming it *Lagenophora (Lagenifera) barkeri* "in acknowledgment of S D Barker's valued assistance in botanical matters".

Samuel Delabere Barker died on 17 September 1901, in his 54th year.