

Francis William Bartlett (1896 – 1979)

Francis William Bartlett was born in 1896 near Silverdale, which was then known as The Wade. His father, Henry William Bartlett, was a carpenter who had come to New Zealand in 1891 from Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, England, and purchased 67 acres of poor clay land, which he named Cromer Farm, on the north bank of the Orewa River. The family of his mother, Caroline Huntingdon Blake, had been in New Zealand since 1861 and established a farm with plantings of trees for shelter and timber on the south side of the river. This property was left to Caroline and her sister Mary Ann after the deaths of their parents in 1886 and 1892. When Caroline married Henry Bartlett in 1895 she moved across the river to Cromer. From there young Francis walked two miles to attend school at The Wade. One of his teachers was a keen botanist who took the pupils on nature walks.

In 1909 Mary Ann Blake, who was unmarried, sold her half-share of the farm to Henry Bartlett; the Blake land became the Bartlett farm and Cromer was later sold. At the age of 12 Francis was receiving wages from his father for help with building, and he also worked on the farm. He served in the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, mainly in France, in the latter part of World War 1, and when his father died soon after his discharge Francis inherited a half-share in the farm. In 1892 he married Thelma Meldrum of Orewa and after the death of his mother in 1927 he became the owner of Bankside, as it had been known for several years.

He was interested in the trees on the property, some dating back to the time of his maternal grandparents; he wrote to foresters and botanists to get them identified, and did further experimental planting. Correspondence with Lucy Moore began in 1934, and for the next 32 years he received help and encouragement from her. He was in demand for specimens of little known species, including mosses and ferns, and in 1945 received his first visit from Dan Hatch, who needed material of rare orchids to complete the studies he had begun in 1941.

During his 18 years' service on the local school committee he fostered an interest in native plants. In 1950 he was co-founder of the Lower Northland Farm Forestry Association, and in 1961 a history of the Bankside plantings and their utilisation featured at the New Zealand conference. By then Bankside was a show place for New Zealand and overseas foresters, and Frank once remarked that he made more money out of the trees than he did from cows!

In 1949 when Dan Hatch described *Caladenia carnea* var. *bartlettii* he recognised "the work of Mr Frank W Bartlett, of Silverdale, whose knowledge of the gumlands flora has made his home the mecca of Auckland enthusiasts for many years". Quiet, unassuming and well read, with incredible knowledge of the gumland plants, forest, roadside and gardens, Frank Bartlett died at Bankside on 19 May 1979.



Caladenia bartlettii

Caladenia from the Greek *kalos* 'beautiful'; *aden* 'gland', refers to the ornamental character of the lip. A terrestrial orchid usually occurring as solitary plants, *Caladenia bartlettii* (synonym *Petalochilus bartlettii*) is sparsely hairy, with a single narrow linear leaf and one (occasionally two) flowers, on a slender erect stem up to 300 mm tall. Petals and sepals are crimson, pink or magenta, fading to white near the centre; the labellum has very deep lateral lobes, its tip and the tops of the calli bright yellow; column-wings are wide, and the mid-lobe trough-shaped with wavy margins. Flowering September to November, it is an uncommon, mainly kauri-zone plant, but has also been found in several localities in central New Zealand.