

## John Joseph Bishop (1865 – 1933)

John Joseph Bishop ("Chappie" or "Chap" to his friends and family) was the son of one of the first settlers in Titirangi.

John Bishop senior was a ship's carpenter who, after settling briefly in Australia, came to New Zealand and became joint owner in a sawmill at Freemans Bay, Auckland. In 1855 he bought an extensive block of land at Titirangi, and developed it as a mixed farm, with crops and livestock. John Bishop and his wife Elizabeth, née MacLeod, had eight children; John Joseph Bishop, the youngest, was born in Titirangi on 2 July 1865, two weeks after his father's death from pneumonia, at the age of 52. His mother, with help, carried on.

The early colonists valued education. The Bishops had tutors for their children, and any of the local children could also, for a small sum, attend the classes in the Bishop home and later, in the newly built community hall. The school was handed over to the education authorities in 1872. Around 1890 John Joseph Bishop married Emily Jemima Surman, from Kensington, England; they lived on the family farm at Titirangi, which he ran at first with his brother William, and they also shared a mail run to Huia. Later, after the partnership ended and most of the livestock was sold, John Bishop's family survived on subsistence farming and the bush, collecting and selling firewood, leaf-mould, sphagnum moss, fungi and native plants.

John Bishop was an enthusiastic botanist, learning from his own observations and research. Encouraged by his good friend Thomas Cheeseman, he would spend spare time with him on his Friday business visits by horse and cart to the city. He also developed close friendships with Lucy Cranwell, T L Lancaster, Donald Petrie and Harry Carse. He became an authority on the flora of the Waitakere Ranges, which he knew intimately, and for a number of years guided parties on field trips and helped overseas visitors locate specimens. He discovered plants not previously known in the area, and grew many interesting specimens at Dunvegan, his home on Huia Road, Titirangi. One of these was the hebe that he recognised as distinct, and was given his name by Petrie in 1926.

He not only read all the scientific papers of the time, he also hosted musical evenings at his home – piano, violin, cello and singing. "Chappie" Bishop was reputed to have been a quiet, gentle man who, if he saw a skylark take wing, would carefully locate its nest and avoid scything that area of grass. He developed cancer, and died on 13 November 1933, survived by his wife Emily, a son and three daughters. He lost two sons in World War One.



### *Hebe bishopiana*

*Hebe bishopiana* forms a rather open, spreading shrub up to about a metre in height. The upper surface of its leaves are shining and very deep, almost blackish green, with acuminate apices. The stems are also dark purplish, as are the leaf buds, which may be quite purplish on the undersides of their leaves. Flowers are light purple, but soon fade to white, and are produced on slightly drooping racemes about 8–12 cm long. Flowering generally occurs from about mid-summer until autumn, with occasional flowers appearing in early winter. *Hebe bishopiana* grows only in a very restricted area of the Waitakere Range, on damp rock faces overlooking Manukau Heads. Its survival in the wild is threatened by the spread of weeds and high public usage – roadworks, trampling and track clearance.