

## Thomas Carrick Chambers (1930 – )

Thomas Carrick Chambers was born in Auckland on 5 September 1930, the son of George Thomas Chambers and his wife Lyda Louisa Chambers, née Higgott. Carrick's interest in biology and the growing of plants began at an early age. He attended Three Kings Primary School, Manukau Intermediate and Otahuhu College, and during school holidays worked in a local plant nursery, gaining a considerable background in propagation and planting. At Otahuhu College he was inspired and encouraged by two outstanding teachers, Dr W S Hill and Miss Miriam Matthews (now Dame Miriam Dell), who introduced her class not only to rainforest ecology, but also to the university environment. He went on to Auckland Teachers College, but decided teaching wasn't for him, and in 1950 entered Auckland University College, majoring in botany, and graduated BSc (1952) and MSc with first-class honours (1954). In 1960 he completed his PhD at the University of Sydney.

In 1959 he married Margaret Fosbery Consett Davis, and made Australia his home. They were to have a daughter and three sons. Chambers had already lectured at the Auckland and Sydney universities, and shortly after completing his degree he joined the botany department of the University of Melbourne, ultimately becoming professor of botany, a post he held for nearly twenty years, 1967–1986. His work included supervising research students in electron microscopy, palaeobotany and fern taxonomy, in addition to undergraduate teaching and laboratory classes. His career changed direction when he returned to Sydney as director of the Royal Botanic Gardens and National Herbarium of New South Wales, a position he held for ten years, until his retirement in 1996.

His botanical interest and expertise were manifest in his major involvement in many projects and other activities. These included the complete landscape re-planning of the grounds of the University of Melbourne, the Ian Potter Farmland Plan demonstrating the return of denuded countryside to productive land, garden restoration and management for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), and the establishment of two new botanic gardens near Sydney. He also co-ordinated early research on the recently discovered Wollemi pine and published many scientific papers on various botanical topics. In retirement he keeps his hand in plant taxonomy, is honorary research associate of the National Herbarium of New South Wales, and travels to see the world's botanical treasures.

*Blechnum chambersii* was a by-product of research material Carrick Chambers assembled for his MSc thesis. Dr Mary Tindale from the herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, later sorted out the nomenclatural problem and chose the name.



### ***Blechnum chambersii***

*Blechnum* is a large genus, often known as hard ferns, with markedly different fertile and sterile fronds, the laminae of the fertile pinnae being much reduced and only wide enough to bear sori in one continuous row either side of the midrib. *Blechnum chambersii*, n. sp., is a common fern, especially along stream banks where the lance-like fronds, which are boldly patterned, curve elegantly in a small tuft. The spore-bearing fronds, which are shorter than the sterile ones, stand up stiffly from the centre of the rosette. *Blechnum chambersii* is abundant in lowland to montane forest in New Zealand, especially in damp places, and is also found in Australia and some Pacific Islands.

