

William Hughes Field (1861 – 1944)

Born in Whanganui, New Zealand, on 17 July 1861, William Hughes Field was the fourth son of Margaret Symes Puslow and her husband Henry Claylands Field (1825–1912) in their family of five daughters and six sons. Henry Field, who was born in Hampshire, England, had been an articled pupil of the famous engineer Sir James Rennie and worked for an English railway company before migrating to New Zealand on the *Simla* in 1851. Appointed clerk and engineer to the Whanganui Town Board, he was later responsible for the construction of 2,000 miles of roads, including the Parapara linking Whanganui and Taupo. In 1883 a red-flowered mistletoe, then plentiful in the area, was named after him (now *Peraxilla tetrapetala*), and in his book on New Zealand ferns (1890) he noted that each of his sons collected plants and specimens for him.

Willie Field (as he was usually known) went to Aramoho School, Whanganui, and was awarded a scholarship to Wellington College, which he attended as a boarder. He gained a New Zealand University Junior Scholarship in 1879.



Conglomerate habitat, Pilch Point, Northwest Nelson, 2017

Carmichaelia juncea

Carmichaelia juncea ('rush-like') embraces several former species. It is a rare, variable prostrate wiry shrub of stable but unconsolidated riverbed gravels and lake edges, or weathered conglomerate coastal rock. The small pea-like flowers are white with purple streaks. Now extinct over much of its former range, it inhabits a few scattered sites from the northwest Nelson coast to Haast.

After serving his articles with C H Bolase in Whanganui, he joined the Wellington law firm of Buckley, Stafford and Fitzherbert in 1885. He was admitted a barrister of the Supreme Court of New Zealand in 1892, a solicitor in 1893 and two years later became a partner in the firm. In 1905 he set up in practice and was to remain a partner in Field, Luckie and Toogood until about 1933. He was fluent in Te Reo Māori and took a particular interest in laws relating to the Māori people.

On 26 April 1893, at St Paul's Cathedral in Dunedin, he married Isabel Jane Hodgkins, the elder daughter of lawyer and artist William Mathew Hodgkins and his Australian wife Rachel Owen Parker. They were to have three sons and two daughters. Isabel and her sister Frances had grown up in a household where painting and exhibiting were a normal part of family life, but Isabel's new responsibilities as a wife and mother left little time for art. In 1900 Field was elected to the House of Representatives in a bi-election when the Otaki seat became vacant after the death of his brother Henry, and except for one three-year break he held the seat for 35 years. He promoted public works, agricultural ventures and conservation measures in his electorate, and for many years he also served on several education boards. He lived in Wellington but visited the Kapiti coast on electoral business or to oversee his two farms at Waikanae. He was reputed to have been a compulsive land speculator, often short of cash, and his wife sometimes painted to pay the grocer!

As a youth Willie had walked with his father from Whanganui to the Karioi plains on the route that became known as Field's Track. His crossings of the southern Tararua Range with Bernard Aston during 1909–10 were legendary. Field obtained funding for development of the crossing as a tourist track, Aston assisted in the survey work, and when the Tararua Tramping Club was founded in 1919 they became president and vice president respectively. From a South Island trip in the summer of 1917–18 *Carmichaelia fieldii* was described as a new species by botanist Leonard Cockayne: "It was growing as a small colony on a windswept sandstone ledge on a small island rising, at low water, out of the mud-flat of Westhaven [Whanganui Inlet]. The plant was discovered by Mr W H Field, MP, to whom it is dedicated. Mr Aston was with Mr Field at the time."

William Hughes Field died on 13 December 1944, survived by his wife and children. His memorials include several bush reserves around Waikanae, and Field Hut and Field Peak in the Tararua Range. The plant named after him is now synonymous with *Carmichaelia juncea*.