

Charles Ethelbert Foweraker (1886 – 1964)

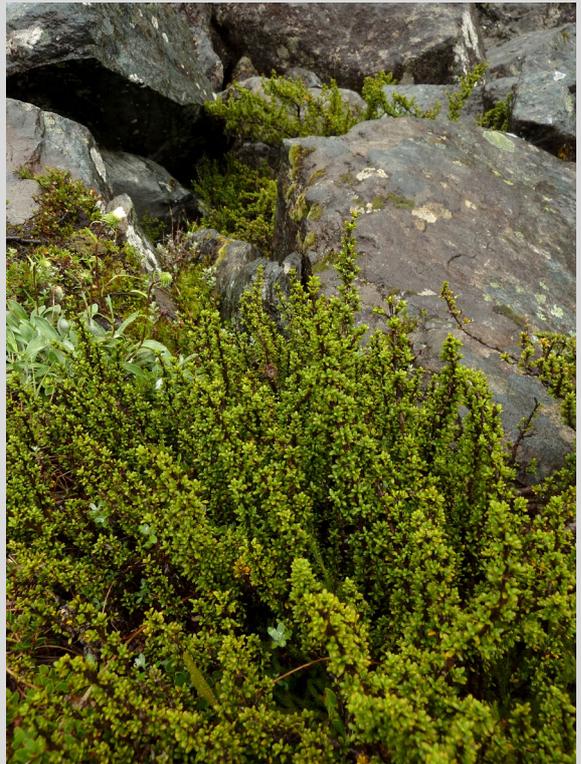
The surname Foweraker originated in the English counties of Somerset and Devon and spread, first around Britain and then around the world. The name may have been a phonetic adaptation of the west English dialect for “four” or “fore” acre, perhaps referring to the area or location of land owned or farmed.

Charles Ethelbert Foweraker was born in New Zealand in 1886 at Waimate, South Canterbury, where his father William Foweraker was station-master. William’s first wife Martha had died in 1882 at the age of 39, leaving six children, and on 19 December 1883 at Christchurch, William married Harriet Frances, the eldest daughter of Robert Morgan of Belfast, Ireland. William and Harriet’s first son died in 1885 when only nine weeks old, and Charles was born the following year. He was educated at Waimate District School, and in 1899 qualified for a junior scholarship of £2.10 (plus £4 for fees if required) for his first two years at Waimate High School. Deciding to make education his career, he trained in Christchurch to become a fully certified teacher, and at the same time undertook university studies, graduating MA in botany in 1916.

His parents died within a year of each other before his graduation, and when he left for overseas war duties in July 1916 his half-sister Rhoda Foweraker was recorded as his next-of-kin. He served in the Near East and in France, and at the end of hostilities was awarded an NZEF scholarship for advanced research in botany at Downing College, Cambridge. In 1919, while still at Cambridge, he married Margaret Jane Willis, a daughter of Robert Bruce Baker Willis, who had recently returned to the family estate, Willisden, near Southbridge, after farming in the North Island. Charles and Jean (as she appears to have been known) made their home at 102b Hackthorne Road in the Cashmere Hills above Christchurch, and there they brought up their children Margaret (Peggy) and John. In 1921 Charles returned to Canterbury College as a lecturer in botany and for ten years from 1924 to 1934 he was the School of Forestry’s founding lecturer. He later became the school’s first director and finally a senior lecturer in botany at Canterbury University College. An active member of the Canterbury Philosophical Institute and a fellow of the Linnean Society of London, he also served on the controlling authorities of Riccarton Bush, Peel Forest and Arthur’s Pass National Park. He died in 1964 in his 78th year.

In 1974 the University of Canterbury’s Charles Foweraker Field Station at Harihari was formally opened and dedicated as a tribute to him, and in

recognition of his work. In 2003 a new species of *Coprosma* from the South Island was named for him. Jean Foweraker, an alpine plant enthusiast and a founding member of the Canterbury Alpine Garden Society, continued to live in the family home until the 1980s. Foweraker House in the Christchurch Botanic Gardens, opened in 1967 as the Alpine House, was renamed in 1980 after her, in acknowledgment of the many alpine plants she donated.



Coprosma fowerakeri

Coprosma is a genus of around 110 Pacific-centred species of coastal to montane trees and shrubs, about half of them endemic to New Zealand. *Coprosma fowerakeri*, previously included within *Coprosma pseudocuneata*, is distinguished by its low spreading habit, stout recurved lateral branches that often root in contact with the soil, fleshy, coriaceous dark green to bronze-green leaves, conspicuous interpetiolar stipules, bright-orange fruit and South Island habitat among boulders with other alpine shrubs, tussock and herbs, and on scree margins.