

Thomas Bannatyne Gillies (1828 – 1889)

The eldest of nine children, Thomas Bannatyne Gillies was born on 17 January 1828 at Rothesay on the Isle of Bute, Scotland. His father, John Gillies, was the local lawyer and town clerk; his mother, Isabella Lillie, was the daughter of a Glasgow businessman and granddaughter of a Huguenot refugee. His parents contracted typhus shortly after his birth, and Thomas spent his first five years at his grandparents' croft. He was educated at the parish school and wanted to qualify as a mechanical engineer, but was pressured by his father to follow law. After a four-year clerkship with him, Thomas left for a commercial career at Manchester, where he was awarded a YMCA gold medal for scholarship.

In Rothesay, the weight of John Gillies' increasing commitments to his law practice, personal business, church and other duties affected his health, and after much debate, the family agreed to emigrate to the Free Church settlement in Dunedin, New Zealand. Thomas Gillies married Catherine Douglas on 1 June 1852 at Newcastle upon Tyne, and on 24 July the clan sailed on the *Slains Castle* for New Zealand. On arrival at Dunedin on 9 November 1852 they purchased land; Thomas Gillies and three of his brothers farmed 100 acres at Tokomairiro, and the rest of the family made their home on 10 acres at Halfway Bush. John Gillies senior resumed legal practice and began a political career.

Thomas Gillies, differing with his father over plans for expansion of Tokomairiro, bought another property at Warepa and built a house there.

A series of articles, "Pencilings by the Way," in the *Otago Witness* showed his progressive intellectual side, and in 1857 he left Warepa, took his Bar examinations and returned to law, taking over his father's partnership. During the early 1860s he followed a career in local and national politics, serving as attorney general in 1862 and as postmaster general and secretary of crown lands in 1863–64. In 1865, out of government and a widower, his wife Catherine having died after childbirth, Gillies left Dunedin with his four children and his youngest sister Bella, for Auckland. He re-entered legal practice, and in 1867 married Agnes Sinclair, a niece of former colonial secretary and botanist Andrew Sinclair. They had two children. He made a successful return to politics, and in March 1875 was appointed judge of the Supreme Court of New Zealand for the Auckland district.

In private life, Thomas Gillies was a science enthusiast. In 1868, with Hutton and Crawford, he co-founded the Auckland Institute, and served several terms as president. When his wife Agnes died in 1884, he dedicated Auckland University science scholarships to her and her uncle. He had a keen interest in conchology and horticulture, explored the beaches of Northland, often with Thomas Kirk, and contributed many papers to the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*. On leave for much of 1887 and 1888, he revisited Britain and died at Auckland, still holding judicial office, on 26 July 1889. *Pseudopanax gilliesii*, a naturally uncommon northern coastal forest tree, was described by Thomas Kirk in 1899.

Pseudopanax gilliesii

Pseudopanax is a genus of twelve small evergreen trees endemic to New Zealand, and includes the lancewoods and five-fingers. Some show striking changes in their leaf and growth forms as they develop. *Pseudopanax gilliesii* is found in coastal forest or scrub in Northland and on Little Barrier Island, and grows to 5 metres tall. Leaves, olive-green, often tinged purple near the margins, have a petiole up to 13.5 cm long, and leaflets are thick, leathery and deeply toothed. The foliage is arranged in alternate whorls of trifoliate and single leaves. Flowers and dark purple oval fruit in terminal umbels can be found throughout most of the year. *Pseudopanax gilliesii* is similar in many respects to *Pseudopanax lessonii* with which it often occurs.

