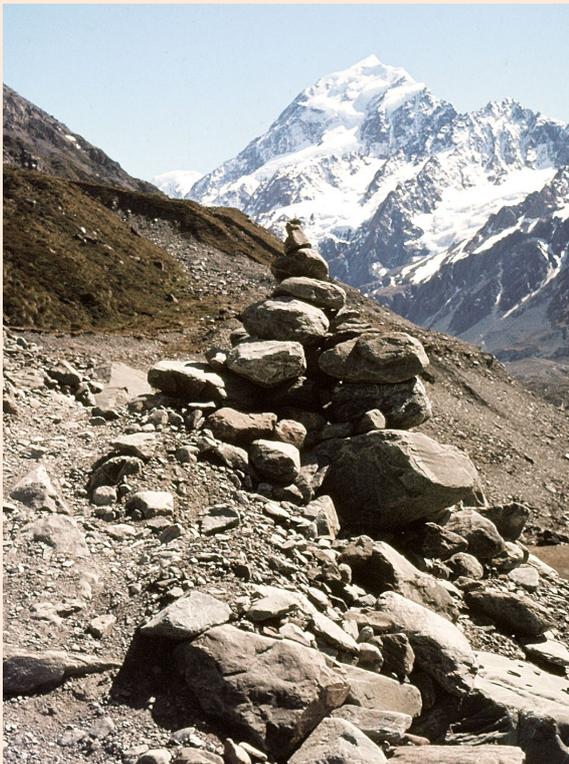


Peter Graham (1878 – 1961)

Peter Graham was born on 18 April 1878 at Five Mile Beach, near Okarito, South Westland, the second youngest of five sons in the family of David Millar Graham, a ferryman, and his wife Isabella Kathleen Ford (formerly Garland, née Newberry). His father was born around 1840 in Paisley, Scotland, and put to work on weaving looms when six years old. Too young to serve in the Crimean War, he migrated to Australia and then to New Zealand, joining the search for gold. Isabella was brought up in London as the adopted daughter of Dr Edward and Mrs Anne Caudle, and immigrated with them to Australia as a 13-year-old in 1852. She took up nursing in Melbourne before moving to the more temperate climate of the West Coast, New Zealand, where she met Peter's father.



Hooker Valley and Aoraki/Mt Cook (1982)

Ranunculus grahamii

Ranunculus grahamii, a high alpine (2300–2800 m) buttercup of rock crevices, ledges and cliff faces within the permanent snowline, is confined to the Aoraki/Mt Cook-D'Archiac area of the central Southern Alps. It is a sturdy, probably summer-green plant up to 15 cm tall, with a stout rhizome bearing numerous stringy rootlets, thick fleshy glaucous leaves and rather slender flowering stems carrying usually one, but up to four large yellow flowers with 5–10 petals. It has a very short growing season in mid to late summer, and because of its habit and altitudinal range, is seldom seen, except by rock climbers.

Isabella was well educated and shared her love of literature, art and music with the family. They also imbibed from her an interest in nature and respect for all living things. Peter attended Okarito School, but left before reaching the sixth standard to work at goldmining and help clear land at Waiho (Franz Josef Glacier) for farming. When David Graham died in 1900 after being partially paralysed for seven years, the family moved to Waiho. Isabella became postmistress, storekeeper and nurse, and as the older brothers moved away, Peter and Alec ran the farm. They enjoyed climbing on the glacier, and were taken deeper into the mountains by their mining friend Arthur Woodham. Expeditions with Hokitika doctor, mountaineer and photographer Ebenezer Teichelmann ("the little doctor") and English alpinist Henry Newton, then vicar at Ross, inspired them to become professional guides.

Peter was employed as assistant guide in 1903 and chief guide in 1906 at the Hermitage, Aoraki/Mt Cook. Australia-born Freda du Faur was a frequent client, and he was with her when she became the first woman to climb Aoraki/Mt Cook in 1910. He also worked on tracks and huts, and in the evenings mingled with hotel guests. Heinrich von Haast told him about the people after whom peaks in the area were named. Thomas Cheeseman encouraged his interest in learning the names of alpine plants, and sent him a copy of his manual, which Peter then used to help artist Miss Murray Aynsley identify the flowers and fruit she painted. Donald Petrie, there for official work on grasses, offered to name any plants he was unsure about, or thought new. On 25 February 1909 Peter Graham, on a first ascent of Coronet Peak, "found a beautiful yellow ranunculus with serrated pale green leaves on a ledge in some loose soil". It was described by Petrie in 1913 and named *Ranunculus grahamii* in his honour.

During winter closures of the Hermitage Peter gained administrative experience at the Tourist Department's head office in Wellington. There, on 1 October 1913 he married Elizabeth Muriel Pringle, an accomplished pianist and teacher; they were to have four children. Meanwhile, in 1911 Alec and brother Jim purchased the small hotel in Waiho and gave it a new site, a second storey and a unique family character. When Jim died in 1922 Peter and Muriel moved to Waiho and helped run Franz Josef Hotel until 1947, when it was sold to the government. The Grahams continued to live in the township, and for his services to mountaineering Peter was appointed MBE in 1956. His wife Muriel died in 1957, and Peter died at home while writing his memoirs, on 7 April 1961.