

# John Ernest Holloway (1881 – 1945)

John Ernest Holloway, the son of John Holloway, a bank manager, and his wife Anna Thorpe, was born in Christchurch on 12 February 1881. He attended the Bishop's School from 1891 to 1895, and Nelson College from 1895 to 1900. His career choices reflected his father's devoutness and interests in natural history and microscopy; in 1901 John went to St John's College, Auckland, to prepare for an Anglican ministry, and concurrently studied science at Auckland University College under Professor A P W Thomas, who interested him in primitive ferns. His MSc thesis, completed with first-class honours in 1905, dealt with native club-mosses. He was ordained in 1908 and worked briefly as assistant curate at Hawera and Wanganui.



## ***Carmichaelia hollowayi***

*Carmichaelia* are rhizomatous shrubs or small trees belonging to the pea or legume family. The genus is confined to New Zealand, except for one species endemic to Lord Howe Island. *Carmichaelia hollowayi* has a sprawling suckering habit and thick branches with rounded tips, up to 50 cm tall. Young erect plants with hairy leaves of 1–3 leaflets are quite unlike the procumbent, leafless adult. Small flowers, white with a dark purple centre, appear in clusters from January until early autumn in the wild, but earlier in cultivation. The fruit are long lasting sharp-tipped dry pods containing 1–3 hard olive seeds. With only about 250 mature plants left in its natural habitat on limestone outcrops on the south side of the Waitaki Valley, North Otago, it is critically endangered.

PHOTO: Philip Smith

In Christchurch, on 21 July 1908, he married Margaret Brenda North, whose father was a rector in Shropshire, England. The following year they visited her family and stayed on in England for two years, John gaining experience in parish duties in London and then in Barnsley, where he became interested in the fossil plants of the Yorkshire coalfields. Returning to New Zealand, he became vicar of Oxford in 1912, Hokitika in 1916 and Leeston from 1922 to 1924. He also furthered his botanical work on *Lycopodium*, *Tmesipteris* and *Hymenophyllum*, his isolation countered by correspondence with Leonard Cockayne and other researchers. His parishioners bought him scientific equipment to save him travelling, and presented him with the robes needed to receive his doctorate from the University of New Zealand in 1919. He was awarded the Hutton Medal in 1920, and became a fellow of the New Zealand Institute in 1921.

Reluctantly, John Holloway gave up most of his active parish work in 1923, to become lecturer in botany at the University of Otago, succeeding retiree Winifred Aitken (née Betts). With no practical assistance and limited finance, he struggled to meet the mixed needs of his students. However, several became professional botanists, among them his son Jack, a foremost forest ecologist, and Dame Ella Campbell, honoured for her research on the lower plants. In 1930 he was awarded the Hector Medal and Prize, and between 1930 and 1944 he published nine papers, his work on the primitive ferns attracting international interest. In 1937 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of London, and two years later he visited scientific correspondents in America and Britain. With failing health, he retired in 1944, and died on 6 September 1945 at Timaru, survived by three daughters and two sons. His wife Margaret, to whom he attributed much of his success, had died the previous year.

He is commemorated in *Carmichaelia hollowayi*, a new species described in 1945 by George Simpson as “a peculiar plant, first collected as a prostrate shrub from sandstone at Mt St Mary, Kurow, Waitaki Valley, by the Reverend J E Holloway, but young plants erect when propagated in his experimental garden at the Otago University Museum”. A rare northern glasswort, *Atriplex hollowayi*, honours his grandson, John Stevenson Holloway (1944-1999).