

William Lauder Lindsay (1829 – 1880)

Born in Edinburgh on 19 December 1829, William Lauder Lindsay was the eldest son of James Lindsay of the General Register House, Edinburgh, and his wife Helen, the daughter of Captain Lauder. As a schoolboy Lindsay displayed the thirst for knowledge, penchant for foreign travel, and skills with pen and pencil that distinguished his later life. He was dux at the Royal High School, Edinburgh, in 1844 and 1845, and then studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh, where Professor John Hutton Balfour encouraged his interest in botany and suggested he study lichens. Despite working as a clerk in the register house throughout his medical course, he graduated MD in 1852, attaining highest honours for his thesis on lichens.



Korthalsella lindsayi

Korthalsella is a widespread genus of about 30 hemiparasitic shrub-like plants belonging to the mistletoe family. The three New Zealand species are endemic. *Korthalsella lindsayi* is a small, leafless mistletoe, 3–10 cm long, growing mostly on *Melicope*, *Coprosma* or *Sophora*. Its stems are few, branching and wide-angled, the internodes thick, flattened and succulent. The tiny green flowers, which appear from September to February, are on narrower branches projecting from the branch nodes. The fruit is an oval succulent drupe, which explodes when ripe, squirting the single seed away to stick on another branch. Occasionally found in central and southern North Island, *Korthalsella lindsayi* is locally common in Canterbury along the eastern foothills of the Southern Alps, and extending to Southland.

In 1854, after a year's service as physician at hospitals in Edinburgh and Dumfries, Lindsay was appointed medical officer at Murray's Royal Institution for the Insane at Perth. His geological and botanical research, especially the continuation of his work on lichens, was respite from his harassing professional career. In 1856 he published *A Popular History of British Lichens*, which did much to popularise the subject, and in 1859 he received the first Neill gold medal from the Royal Society of Edinburgh for his work in that field. In the same year he married Elizabeth, the only daughter of William Paterson Reid, solicitor, of Demerara (one of the original British colonies, now part of Guyana). They had at least one daughter.

Lindsay had long suffered poor health, and sought relief through travel during the long periods of leave generously granted by his directors. One such vacation brought him to Otago, New Zealand, and based at William Martin's farm, Fairfield, from October 1861 to January 1862, he studied the botany and geology of the region, collected specimens and later published many papers on his observations. He was awarded a silver medal from the New Zealand Exhibition of 1865 in recognition of his botanical researches, which added many new species to the New Zealand lichen flora, and were published in 1868 as *Contributions to New Zealand Botany*. He also travelled to Germany, Norway and Iceland and published on the flora of those countries. His many monographs and papers were illustrated with his own fine drawings.

He not only wrote profusely on the natural sciences, he also published many pamphlets on mental illness, education and other subjects. His last work, *Mind in the Lower Animals* (1879), broke new ground, and was controversial. After over twenty years' service, Lindsay resigned from his position as medical superintendent. An avid reader and an energetic worker throughout his life, he died at his home in Edinburgh on 24 November 1880, at the age of 52. The fungal genus *Lauder lindsaya*, and two New Zealand flowering plant species, *Celmisia lindsayi* and the small mistletoe, *Korthalsella lindsayi*, commemorate him.