

Alan Francis Mark (1932 –)

Alan Francis Mark was born in Dunedin on 19 June 1932, the son of Cyril Lionel Mark, an electrician, and his wife Frances Evelyn, née Marshall. He followed an interest in plants through Mosgiel District High School and the University of Otago, completing his BSc degree in 1953 and MSc in 1955, and with the assistance of a Fullbright Travel Grant, a PhD in 1958 at Duke University in North Carolina, USA. In 1957 he married Patricia Kaye Davie, daughter of Arthur and Ivy Davie; they were to bring up two daughters and two sons at their Wakari Road home in Dunedin's northern hill suburb of Helensburgh.



Alan Mark, Mt Burns, 2001

Celmisia markii

Celmisia is an important genus of Australasian daisies, mainly alpine, centred in New Zealand. Although the flower heads are similar in form, species vary widely in size, leaf shape and habit. *Celmisia markii* is a woody-based perennial herb forming cushions up to 80 cm diameter with needle-like leaves, the upper surface yellowish-green with a median groove, the lower surface clad in white tomentum; flowers from December to February. It is confined to high rainfall areas above the treeline west of the Main Divide between Haast River and Caswell Sound, on sparsely vegetated ground, fell field and in tussock grassland. The somewhat similar *Celmisia spedenii* has a more limited range on ultramafic outcrops east of the Main Divide in southern Southland.

After two years 1958-1959 as plant ecologist with the Otago Catchment Board, Alan became the first research fellow of the Hellaby Indigenous Grasslands Research Trust, and since 1965 has been its research adviser. A lecturer, reader and associate professor (1960) at Otago University, he was appointed professor of botany in 1975. Visits to the European Alps and Scandinavia in 1966 convinced him of the need to interpret our alpine plants, and led to the publication in 1973 of *New Zealand Alpine Plants*, co-authored with Nancy M Adams. After several revisions and reprints, its successor, *Above the Treeline*, was published in 2012.

In 1984 botanists William G Lee and David R Given described *Celmisia markii* as a new species, "named after Professor Alan Mark, its discoverer [January 1969], in recognition of his contribution to our understanding and appreciation of alpine ecology in the South Island".

Believing that good science should be central to conservation decision making, his wide-ranging research interests in the ecology of tussock grasslands, alpine lands, wetlands, shrublands, forests and lakeshores are reflected in the leading roles he has undertaken in many organisations and groups, including the Guardians of the Lakes (Manapouri and Te Anau), Otago Conservation Board, National Parks and Reserves Authority, Land Settlement Board, Mountain Lands Committee, Mid Dome Wilding Tree Charitable Trust, Wetlands Task Force, Native Forest Action Council (Maruia Society), Fiordland Marine Guardians, Ecological Society and Forest and Bird Protection Society (notably the successful Te Wahipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area campaign).

A fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand since 1978, with scientific publications numbering into the hundreds, he has received civil honours and many awards in recognition of his scientific and conservation work. In 1975 he received the Loder Cup in recognition of his work for conservation of the New Zealand flora. More recent honours include a knighthood in 2009, the Royal Society's Charles Fleming Award for Environmental Achievement in 2010, marked by a New Zealand lecture tour the following year, and in 2014 an honorary doctorate in science from the University of Otago. Although officially retired since 1998, Emeritus Professor Sir Alan Mark still spends time in his university office on most days when not in the field or in his Dunedin alpine and forest garden. His recreational enjoyment of nature is inseparable from his life's work, and he has plenty still to keep him going.

