

Henry John Matthews (1859 – 1909)

Henry Matthews, the sixth child and youngest son of George and Elizabeth Matthews, was born in Dunedin on 19 September 1859. His parents and their first three children had arrived at Port Chalmers on the *Lady Nugent* on 26 March 1850. His father, an Aberdeenshire farmer's son, had become an experienced horticulturist in Scotland and Ireland, and soon after his arrival in New Zealand started a seed and nursery business in Moray Place, Dunedin. Several years later he established his large Hawthorne Hill Nursery at Morningside, and with John McIntyre, an enthusiastic and knowledgeable foreman, the business expanded to include large-scale landscaping and planting. Henry Matthews joined the firm, and had been manager for about four years when his father died in 1884.

Under Henry's management, native plants became a feature of the nursery. Catalogues listing hundreds of species of trees, shrubs, ferns and herbs were issued, plant lovers were invited to inspect the large stock borders and alpine rock garden, and Otago was explored for novelties. In February 1895 Matthews was invited to join the scientific party accompanying the governor on his inspection of Stewart, Auckland, Campbell, Antipodes and Chatham Islands; he made an extensive collection of plants, a large number of which were sent to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. By this time the business was winding down, and in August 1895, aged 36, he was appointed forester to the

Department of Lands and Survey. In October 1895 he married Grace Annie Gordon, 22 years old, born in Hampshire, and niece of William Martin, another pioneer Otago nurseryman. In 1900 he became chief forester.

Matthews was largely responsible for the establishment of a network of nurseries and plantations throughout New Zealand. In 1903 he was asked to prepare a manual on forestry for the use of settlers, and two years later his very useful *Tree Culture in New Zealand* was published. The 63 excellent plates were reproduced from photographs taken by his wife Grace, who accompanied him as far afield as North Auckland and Mt Fyffe, near Kaikoura. On his travels he collected specimens and information for botanists Petrie, Cheeseman and Cockayne. The latter, the closest to Matthews in age and interests, also joined him on several field trips.

In early April 1909, feeling extremely unwell, Matthews went to Auckland for medical advice, and died there on 28 April, at the age of 49. After his death Grace Matthews returned to England where she died in Guildford in 1967. Henry John Matthews is commemorated in the names of six plants, one of which, *Wahlenbergia matthewsii*, was "named in honour of the late Mr H J Matthews, the discoverer of the plant", by his friend Leonard Cockayne, in 1915.

Wahlenbergia matthewsii

Wahlenbergia is a genus of around 120 species of mainly Southern Hemisphere harebells, with ten native species in New Zealand. The genus *Campanula* is its counterpart in the north. A perennial, erect or spreading subshrub up to 30 cm tall, *Wahlenbergia matthewsii* sends fleshy white taproots, which soon develop rhizomes, deep into rock crevices. Stems arising from the base bear numerous, crowded dark green linear leaves, and in summer, attractive white to pale blue flowers up to 3 cm across. Confined to limestone rock, mainly steep river gorges and cliffs, from sea level to lower montane areas, between the Flaxbourne and Clarence Rivers in Marlborough, it is relatively abundant away from browsing animals.

