

# David Monro (1813 – 1877)

David Monro, the seventh of Maria and Alexander Monro's twelve children, was born in Edinburgh on 27 March 1813. His father was the third generation of anatomy professors at the world-famous Edinburgh Medical School. David was a foundation pupil at Edinburgh Academy for twelve years and then spent two sessions at the University of Edinburgh taking general studies. In 1832 he enrolled at the medical school. After graduating MD in 1835 he studied in Europe for three years and then began practice in Edinburgh, diversifying by giving anatomy lectures to art students.

In 1841, backed by his father, he bought four allotments of land in the New Zealand Company's proposed Nelson settlement, and sailed as surgeon on the *Tasmania*, bound for Melbourne, Australia. He spent some time with his brother, who had a sheep station in Victoria, and then sailed on the *Ariel* to New Zealand, arriving in Nelson in March 1842 and settling at Waimea West, a few miles to the south. Monro was soon an active leader in the district – a Justice of the Peace and an early member of the Nelson Literary and Scientific Institution. In 1844 he joined Frederick Tuckett, the New Zealand Company's surveyor, on a three-month expedition to find a suitable South Island site for the company's proposed Presbyterian settlement. Otago Harbour and its hinterland was eventually chosen, and became Dunedin, the old Celtic name for Edinburgh.

In 1845 David Monro married Dinah Secker. At their home, Bearcroft, they established an orchard and vegetable garden, and brought up a family of five boys and two girls. The Sydney businessman, explorer and botanist John Carne Bidwill visited for a few days in 1848, and with Monro's help, collected plants from inland Nelson for Sir William Hooker. These were to be a valuable contribution to Joseph Hooker's *Flora Novae-Zelandiae*. At Sir William's request, Monro continued to send him specimens and seeds from Nelson, Marlborough and North Canterbury. Among his other visitors were Ferdinand von Hochstetter, who Monro joined on geological expeditions in 1859, and Andrew Sinclair, who came to Nelson in about 1860 and collected with Monro in the mountains. Monro's last major contribution to New Zealand botany was in 1862 when, as a member of parliament, he recommended that the House make provision for £500 for expenses attendant to the publication of a manual of New Zealand botany. This led to Joseph Hooker's *Handbook of the New Zealand Flora*, with more new material from Monro.

David Monro took an active part in the political development of both the Nelson province and the colony as a whole, and was knighted in 1866. His contribution to New Zealand botany is recognised in a subgenus and at least eight plant species from the upper South Island that carry his name. He died in Nelson on 15 February 1877, at the age of 63.



## ***Brachyglottis monroi***

*Brachyglottis* is a genus of about 28 species endemic to New Zealand. It includes the native shrub, tree and herb species previously included in *Senecio*. *Brachyglottis monroi* is a rounded, many-branched shrub up to about 1.5 metres in height. The branchlets and underside of the alternate leaves have a dense covering of hairs. The leaves have shallow rounded teeth and crinkled margins, and are usually sticky when young; flowers are bright yellow. *Brachyglottis monroi* grows on cliffs and rocky slopes from sea level to the subalpine zone in Marlborough and North Canterbury, and is the dominant species in some places. It is also common in cultivation.