

# Johann Gottfried Ölschläger (1635 – 1711)

Johann Gottfried Ölschläger was born in Halle, Germany, on 28 September 1635, the eldest son of Pastor Gottfried Ölschläger (1604-1685) and his wife Anna, the daughter of Halle Council chamberlain Johann David Wogau. The family name, which means 'oil-presser', dates back to Johann's grandfather, Johann Kupfermann (1546-1623), who adopted it because it reflected his father's work. The name was Latinised to Olearius (Latin *olea*: olive tree and fruit, a source of olive oil) and became renowned for its several generations of prominent theologians, professors, lawyers, musicians and composers.

After Johann's mother died of the plague in 1636 his father married Elisabeth Schäffer, a lawyer's daughter. Of the nine children born of the two marriages, it seems that only three reached adulthood. Johann attended the local gymnasium, and in the winter of 1652-1653 entered the University of Leipzig, where he graduated with a bachelor degree in 1654 and a master's degree in philosophy in January 1656. He then made an educational journey southwest to the universities of Strasbourg, Heidelberg, Marburg and in 1658 back to Jena.

On his return to Halle he was ordained as an adjunct to his father at the Marktkirche, before becoming a deacon in 1662 and pastor in 1685. Three years later he was appointed senior pastor and professor of theology at the gymnasium in Arnstadt. As a Lutheran theologian, he wrote on contemporary religious issues and devotional subjects, and collected, wrote and published hymns. A master of many disciplines, he was also a botanist and author of a work on hyacinths (*Hyacinthus orientalis*), and

in 1668 published *Specimen Florae Hallensis*, in which he recorded and commented on his observations of plants over a three-year period in his garden in Halle.

Olearius married four times. His first marriage, in Halle on 9 October 1660, was to Dorothea Malsius, daughter of the Eisenach chancellor, Simon Malsius. She died in 1679, a few months after the birth of their eleventh child, six of whom reached adulthood. On 7 September 1680 he married, also at Halle, the widow Eleonora Nicolai, the daughter of a Ludwiger councilman and churchwarden. She, too, died after childbirth, with only two of their five children surviving. His third and fourth marriages, in Arnstadt in 1689 and 1704, were also to widows; his last child, a daughter born in 1691, lived only four months.

Although he became blind in 1709, Olearius remained in office and was active until his death in Arnstadt on 21 May 1711, in his 76th year. His fourth wife Elizabeth survived him, and died in Arnstadt ten years later.

In 1802 the German botanist Conrad Moech (1744-1805), in his *Supplementum ad Methodum Plantas*, made the first reference to *Olearia*, the southern genus of tree daisies. The dedication, "In memoriam Joannis Gothofredi Olearii, auctoris speciminis halensis sive designatio plantarum hortuli sui, quibus is infructus suit 1666-1668. Halae saxonium 1668," commemorates Johann Gottfried Ölschläger, also known as Olearius, who wrote *Specimen Florae Hallensis* about plants in his garden in Halle, Saxony.

## ***Olearia ilicifolia***

About 180 *Olearia* species occur in Australia and New Zealand, with a few in Lord Howe Island and New Guinea. *Olearia ilicifolia* (Latin *ilex* 'holly'; *folium* 'leaf'), mountain holly or hakeke, is a stiff-growing shrub or small tree with brown peeling bark. Long narrow leaves, dull yellowish green above, and undersides yellowish white with soft tomentum, have wavy margins with sharply serrated teeth – hence the common name. Flat-topped clusters of fragrant white flowers in summer are followed by fluffy windborne seeds. In the North Island, hakeke occurs in montane shrubland from Hikurangi to Taranaki/Mt Egmont and the Tararua Range. The South Island form is mainly on and west of the Main Divide, and on Stewart Island down to sea level.

