

# James Park (1857 – 1946)

James Park, the second son of James Park, a journeyman mason, and his wife Mary Snowie, was born at Kintore, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, on 2 July 1857. After finishing school he studied from 1872 to 1874 at the Royal School of Mines, South Kensington, London, and gained awards in both academic and sporting fields. In the mid 1870s he migrated to New Zealand and worked on sheep farms in the Wairarapa until 1878, when wool prices collapsed. Returning to Wellington, he became a field assistant with the Geological Survey of New Zealand under director James Hector. In 1880 at Wellington he married Frances Olive Rogers, with whom he had seven daughters and three sons.

His first geological explorations were with Alexander McKay in the Nelson province in 1879, followed in 1881–1882 by geological and botanical explorations with McKay and Buchanan in Otago and Canterbury. In 1882 he transferred to the Survey Department at Nelson and worked for several years as a computing geologist. During his time in Nelson he resurrected the defunct Nelson Philosophical Society. He was appointed director of the Thames School of Mines in 1889, and under his leadership the school built up a reputation as the best of its kind in New Zealand. In 1896 he became consultant to a large London-based gold mining syndicate, but returned to teaching five years later as professor of mining at the University of Otago School of Mines. He was subsequently made dean of

the mining faculty, and held both positions until his retirement from the university in 1931, aged 74.

Tall, physically fit and abstemious, Park was an enthusiastic mountaineer. He helped form the nucleus of the New Zealand Alpine Club, and in 1886 made one of the earliest ascents of Tahurangi, the highest peak of Ruapehu. He wrote a series of educational textbooks on mining topics, which have been published in several editions. Although a competent teacher, his strictness and inability to suffer fools gladly earned him respect rather than affection, nor did he always get along with other staff members. His family life, too, was strained; his wife left him after his move to Dunedin, and in 1918 he married again, to Jane Clow Gray.

During his retirement, Park continued his interest in scientific societies, and spent his last years at Oamaru. In 1946, shortly after a visit from his son, Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park, he died at the age of 89, survived by his second wife and eight children of his first marriage. His portrait hangs in the Scottish National Gallery, among those of other distinguished Scots.

Describing *Raoulia parkii* in his 1881 paper "On the Alpine Flora of New Zealand", John Buchanan wrote: "This beautiful little alpine was collected on the Mt Alta Range, South Island, by Mr McKay at an altitude of 5,000 feet ... Named in compliment to Mr J Park, assistant, Geological Survey."



## ***Raoulia parkii***

All forms of *Raoulia* are basically ground-hugging, mat-forming perennial plants. The genus was first published by J D Hooker in Etienne Raoul's 1846 book of New Zealand plant descriptions and illustrations, but there is uncertainty over which of the two similar species occurring near Akaroa was described. *Raoulia parkii* is a small, open mat-forming plant with broad, closely overlapping leaves (3–5 x 2 mm), recurved at their tips and covered with pale yellowish hairs, and in summer small yellow flower heads 4–7 mm across. It is usually a minor subalpine to high alpine plant in depleted or exposed areas of snow-tussock grassland, cushion field and fellfield, east of the South Island Main Divide, from mid-Canterbury to Central Otago.