

# Joseph Crosby Smith (1853 – 1930)

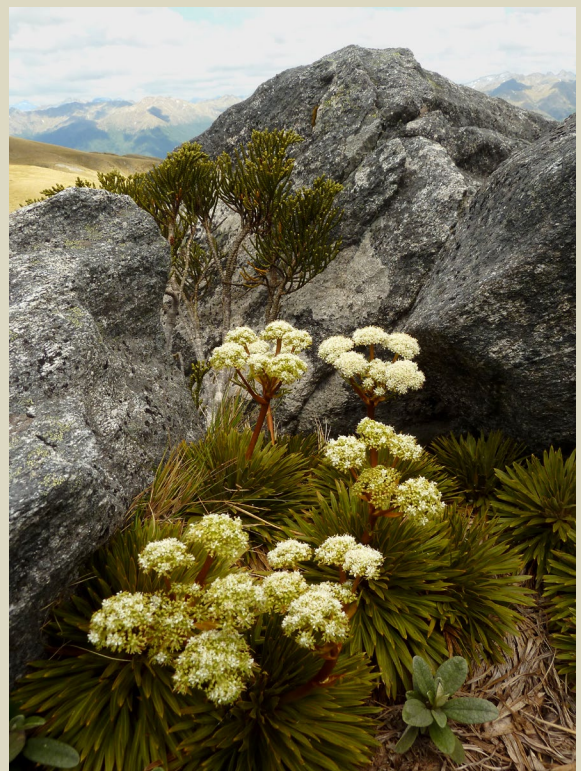
Joseph Smith, the son of Matthew Smith, was born on 18 July 1853 at Keighley, in Yorkshire, England. His mother's maiden name was Crosby, and Joseph always gave his name as J Crosby Smith. At the age of nine he was working part-time at the Dean Clough carpet mill. One of the partners, Edward Crowley, had a private observatory that the boy was encouraged to visit, and it is thought that his interest in natural science may have been stimulated there.

Smith immigrated to New Zealand on the second voyage of the clipper *Calypso*, which arrived at Port Chalmers from London on 13 November 1875 with 31 passengers, 64 sheep and 150 tons of railway plant. It is uncertain whether he was accompanied by his wife Mary Ann, or whether they married some time after his arrival. They settled in Dunedin, where Joseph was employed for 25 years as bookkeeper at the foundry of Henry E Shacklock, the designer and manufacturer of the popular "Orion" cast iron coal ranges. He also taught shorthand at the Caledonian Society's evening classes. For about three years he served on the Caversham Borough Council, and he was a founder and first secretary of the St John Ambulance Association in Dunedin. Towards the late nineties he became an active member of the Dunedin Naturalists' Field Club; he studied seaweeds and corresponded with Robert Laing in Christchurch, and extended his knowledge of ferns, fern allies and seed plants. In 1896 he was elected a member of the Otago Institute.

In 1901 Smith moved to Invercargill, where he went into business as an ironmonger in partnership with J M Laing; by 1910 Smith & Laing had a branch at Winton. For several years he was a member of the Invercargill Borough Council and of the Southland Education Board. Broadening his botanical work, he made excursions to Mt Anglem on Stewart Island and to little-known areas in Southland with Cockayne, Petrie, Gibbs, Laing and others, photographing and later publishing both scientific papers and newspaper articles. He also gave public lectures illustrated by his coloured lantern slides. In November 1907 he was one of the botanists on an expedition organised by the Canterbury Philosophical Institute to the subantarctic islands, and on 5 December that year he was elected a fellow of the Linnean Society of London. He retired to Dunedin in 1925, and the following year was elected president of the Otago Institute.

Joseph Crosby Smith died on 18 April 1930, aged 76, after falling from the roof of his home at St Kilda. Cockayne remembered him as "a delightful companion – his Yorkshire humour always to the fore", and paid tribute to "his devoted wife, his true companion to whom he owed so much". She died seven years later, at the age of 85. They had three sons.

*Aciphylla crosby-smithii*, a speargrass he collected on Mt Cleughorn in January 1914, is one of five southern alpine plants named in his honour. To distinguish him from other Smiths, his name was hyphenated for specific epithets of the plants named after him.



## ***Aciphylla crosby-smithii***

*Aciphylla* is an alpine genus of 40 species mainly confined to New Zealand. Many are distinctive, but as most flower irregularly, identification sometimes has to be made on vegetative parts alone. The larger species are commonly known as speargrass or spaniard. *Aciphylla crosby-smithii* is a rigid herb forming bronze-green cushions up to 60 cm across. The leaf-like stipules and pairs of leaflets are stiff and rigid, with tips abruptly narrowed into sharp points. The stout flower stems end in a fairly broad head with leafy bracts. Confined to southern Fiordland, it is locally common on fairly exposed rocky slopes in short snow tussock-herbfield at 1400–1600 m on Mt Burns in the Hunter Mountains.