

## Ian Michael St George (1941 – )

Ian St George is a descendent of one of the earliest resident doctors in Taranaki. His great-great-grandfather George Hanbury Farrady St George (1808–1893) from Shropshire, England, left on the immigrant ship *Amelia Thompson* and arrived at the fledgling settlement of New Plymouth, New Zealand, on 3 September 1841. The next year he married Matilda Jane Shaw, whose family had been fellow passengers. Although possibly not qualified, the doctor had certainly been trained, and during his more than forty years in practice he earned the respect of both settlers and Māori. At first his income was supplemented by farming and other duties, as well as a dispensary, which he later assigned to his third child and assistant Leonard (Leo) St George (1848–1920), Ian's great-grandfather. Members of two further generations were also to become chemists. However, Ian's father Vernon Douglas St George (1917–1998) bucked the trend and became a farming cadet on the Coromandel Peninsula. In 1938 he married Elizabeth Joy Hanan and went sharemilking.

Ian Michael St George, the second of their four children, was born in a farm cottage at Omahu in the Thames Valley on 15 April 1941 while his father was on war service in New Caledonia. He grew up imbibing his father's intimate knowledge of native plants and the bush and his mother's interest in art and gardening. After attending various primary schools he went to St Kentigern College in Auckland, where he was Dux, and then on to Otago Medical School. At Roxburgh on 18 May 1963 he married Joy Macnicol, a secretary; their daughter Tanya was born in 1965, the year of Ian's graduation, and son Paul in 1967. His second marriage, in 1993, was to Wellington lawyer Kristy McDonald.

Ian had always been interested in the native flora, but seeking advice on the care of a cymbidium orchid given by his mother, went to an Otago Orchid Society meeting. Janette West spoke about native orchids, of which Ian knew nothing. He was hooked, and they became the focus of his current interests: bush walking, photography and drawing! Through Dorothy Cooper's newly formed New Zealand Native Orchid Group (1982) he made contact with other enthusiasts. She handed the newsletter over to him after twenty issues, and he is still deeply involved. His orchid discoveries led to great respect for the 19th century polymath William Colenso, and his many publications – medical, botanical and historical – include six books on Colenso and a monthly newsletter for the Colenso Society. He has addressed meetings and conferences in New Zealand, Australia and Japan, mainly on native orchid-related topics. Naturally, overseas travel has always included orchiding, not only in Britain, where expert David Lang guided him to various

sites, but also in France, Spain, Italy, the Greek Islands, Colorado and Australia.

In 2009 he was awarded the Hatch Medal for his outstanding contributions to New Zealand orchidology. He discovered and in 1994 (with Brian Molloy) formally described a new native orchid, *Drymoanthus flavus*, and in 2016 a spider orchid was named *Corybas sanctigeorgianus* in his honour. In his profession, Dr Ian St George has fulfilled many leadership roles and received numerous awards, including in 1972 the Gold Medal of the Hunterian Society, London, and in 2002 distinguished fellowship of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners. In 2016, still a practising GP, he shuttles between Wellington and Gladstone in the Wairarapa where he and Kristy have lived and grown olives for over twenty years. They share an appreciation of the arts and a love of the bush, and often roam the tracks looking for native orchids.



*Corybas sanctigeorgianus*

Corybas 'helmet' alludes to the flower shape. This newly described (2016) spider orchid is known from only one locality in the Hunua Range in the North Island, where it grows in mixed broadleaf/podocarp forest. It flowers in August–September and may be distinguished from other species by the long dorsal sepal extending beyond the labellum, which has a white centre.

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