

# Charles Traill (1826 – 1891)

The name Traill is synonymous with early botanical exploration on Stewart Island. As well as making new discoveries themselves, Charles and his half-brothers Walter Traill (1850–1924) and Arthur William Traill (1852–1936) provided hospitality and assistance to visiting naturalists. Their father, William Traill of Westness and Woodwick, Orkney, married twice and raised two families of eight. Charles's mother was Harriet Sarle, William's first wife; Walter and Arthur were sons of William's second wife, Henrietta Moodie Heddie.

Charles Traill was born on Rousay, an island of northern Orkney, on 13 November 1826. After a local education and two years at Edinburgh University, he was apprenticed to a lawyer. In 1849 he went to Australia to run sheep, but left the following year for the Californian gold-diggings. Three years later, his health undermined, he returned to Orkney. By 1856 he was in Oamaru, New Zealand, where he established the short-lived mercantile firm Traill, Roxby & Company.

A strand in a long family skein of naturalists, he was an ardent conchologist, and at the 1865 Colonial Exhibition in Dunedin was awarded an exhibition medal for his work in this field. In 1869 he sent James Hector the results of his observations on fossil molluscs, extracts of which were published in 1870. While dredging for shells in Foveaux Strait, he was attracted to Stewart Island, and took up land on the island of Ulva, then known as Coupar's Island, in Paterson Inlet. He opened a store selling provisions and nautical gear, and when the first Stewart Island

post office was built on Ulva, he was appointed postmaster. On 27 April 1871 he married Danish-born Henriette Jessie Bucholz. Tragically, she died on 27 August 1875, when their daughter Ellen was only three.

Charles Traill spent the last twenty years of his life on Ulva, attending to the store and mail, collecting specimens of local plants and shells for himself and for others, and establishing a flourishing garden of native and exotic plants. Important visitors included George Thomson, Donald Petrie and Robert Paulin from Dunedin, French naturalist Dr Henri Filhol and botanist Thomas Kirk, but he was also interested in the welfare of the local people. When his son Walter returned to Stewart Island from overseas in the late 1880s he lived with Charles on Ulva, and after Charles's death on 26 November 1891, took over the post office and store.

A rare shell, *Cuspidaria traillii*, was named by Hutton in 1873 after Charles Traill, and in 1884 Kirk dedicated *Olearia traillii* "to my old and valued friend, Mr C Traill, who has done so much towards extending our knowledge of the natural history and botany of Stewart Island". *Aciphylla traillii* was named in compliment to Arthur Traill, who accompanied Kirk during his ascent of Mt Anglem, and "for valuable assistance in elucidating the *Flora of Stewart Island*". There are no citations for *Myosotis antarctica* subsp. *traillii* (1884) or *Cotula traillii* (1899).



## ***Leptinella traillii* subsp. *traillii***

*Leptinella* ('thin and slender') is a genus of 33 species in Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, the subantarctic islands and South America. It was found as a genus by Cassini in 1822 and taken up by William J Hooker (1841) when he described some plants from South America, but for more than 100 years was relegated to *Cotula*. The genus *Leptinella* was reinstated in 1987. *Leptinella traillii* subsp. *traillii* is a low, creeping herb with slender rooting stems. Leaves, dull brown-green or yellow-green, are often partially stained dark brown, the small teeth hair-tipped. Flower heads are yellow-green, male and female on separate plants. Endemic to Stewart and adjacent islands, it is locally common on damp coastal banks and beaches.