

Inches Campbell Walker (1841 – 1911)

In 1875 Captain Inches Campbell Walker (later Colonel) of the Indian Forest Service became New Zealand's first conservator of forests. He was born on 7 October 1841, a son of Charles Walker, of Dundee, Scotland, and Margaret Campbell Inches, who had married there on 18 April 1825. At the age of 16, after his education "at Musselburgh and abroad", he entered the Forfar and Kincardine Militia Artillery. Two years later he obtained his commission as ensign in the Madras Infantry and from May 1865 he served in the Madras forest department as assistant and then deputy conservator. He was appointed a commissioner for the Vienna Exhibition in 1873, and for his services there was made a Knight Commander of the Order of Franz Joseph of Austria.

His scientific approach to forestry in India and reports on forest management in Germany, Austria and Britain came to the attention of New Zealand legislators grappling with conflicting demands for timber and agricultural land, and preservation of rapidly dwindling indigenous forests. In London on official business in 1875, Premier Julius Vogel met Captain Arthur Campbell Walker, a fellow whist enthusiast and elder brother of Inches Campbell Walker. The acquaintance led to Vogel's letter to the latter, dated 20 May 1875, which began, "I understand from your brother that you are willing to accept the appointment of Conservator of State Forests in New Zealand." Obtaining leave of absence from the Indian government, Walker accepted Vogel's offer of a one-year renewable contract and arrived in New Zealand in March 1876.

To become familiar with local conditions he spent seven months, often accompanied by botanist Thomas Kirk, on a study tour of major forest areas in the North and South Islands. In his subsequent reports of 1876 and 1877, he emphasised the importance of conserving existing forests in catchment areas to protect agricultural land against flooding and erosion, and advocated the systematic management of indigenous forests and further tree-planting to meet future timber needs. But due to adverse economic times and antagonistic vested interests, state forestry was shelved. Vogel left New Zealand to become agent-general in London; Campbell Walker was not reappointed, and in 1877 he returned to India where he served with distinction, and from 1881 was conservator of forests in Mysore. He retired in January 1892 to Surrey, England, where his interests included local affairs, and maintaining Indian forestry contacts. On 12 April 1893 in London he married 25 year-old Constance Conway Smith, née Butler. He died on 17 April 1911 at his home in Camberley, Surrey, aged 69.

Inches Campbell Walker and Thomas Kirk must have got on well together. In 1876 Kirk named an alpine daisy *Celmisia walkeri* after his friend, who was with him when he discovered it on the dividing range above Lake Harris, Otago. Before leaving in 1877, Campbell Walker presented Kirk with an engraved silver-mounted horn flask. Now the most historically valuable award in New Zealand science, the Kirk Horn Flask is awarded every second year for outstanding contributions to forestry.



Celmisia walkeri

Celmisia, a large Australasian genus of more than 60 species, is one of the most characteristic groups of New Zealand alpine plants. Although the daisy flower heads are somewhat similar between species, plant and leaf form vary widely. *Celmisia walkeri* is a sprawling shrub with slightly sticky leaves, the upper surface glabrous, and the lower surface covered by white tomentum, except for the narrow midrib. Sticky green flower stems 5–10 cm long arise at the branch tips and have several small narrow bracts and a white daisy head 2–4 cm across. Subalpine to low alpine in South Island high rainfall regions close to the Main Divide, it is often present in snow tussock herbfield or on rock outcrops.