

## Obituary

### James Finch 1919–2002



Jim Finch, who had worked at Chemistry Division, DSIR and was a member of the New Zealand Geochemical Group, joining before 1981, died on 9 June 2002, aged 83.

Jim attended Timaru Boys' High School between 1933 and 1936, and then the Otago School of Mines between 1937 and 1941, where he completed a BSc in 1940 and a BE Metallurgy in 1941. He commenced service in the RNZAF in December 1941 as an Airman Pilot. From 1942 to 1944 he was a flying instructor at the military flying training school, until he left the service at the end of August 1944.

Following his World War II service, Jim worked for Sylvia Mines Consolidated (surveyor and Manager's Assistant), and Broken Hill Associated Smelters, Port Pirie. He continued his university studies completing a PhD at the Geology School, University of Melbourne, Australia.

He was appointed Assistant Petrologist at NZ Geological Survey, Lower Hutt in June 1945, and Chemist at Chemistry Division (then the Dominion Laboratory) of DSIR, Lower Hutt, in June 1946. Jim remained at the Gracefield laboratory through the restructuring to DSIR. His research resulted in published papers on titanomagnetite ironsand, ilmenite, mica, glasses, sulphur content of minerals and coal, and the determination of various trace elements in minerals. Jim was a chemist of the old school, a wet chemist, and a meticulous analyst who could build his own equipment and improve it to his high standards. This included new methods for S and P in steel. Later his main interests were in the structure and properties of mica. Although never active in the Geochemical Group, even up to a month before his death, he would phone to check his subscription and to say how much he appreciated reading his mail of scientific journals and newsletters.

His love of the outdoors and field geology led easily to his involvement in the Hutt Valley Tramping Club. In the lab, his outdoor interests were not always popular as he always had the windows wide open, winter and summer, sunny or southerly! For many years he lived in the single men's camp near Chemistry Division (he remained single all his life, and had few relatives in New Zealand). The accommodation there was spartan, in small huts, and he was reputed to often

cook his meals in the lab using a bunsen burner! Jim was very keen on outdoor pursuits, including tramping, rock climbing (instructor), mountain climbing and skiing. He was much valued in the tramping club for his mentoring abilities with younger trampers and climbers, and for his explosives experience (from his mining days) when hut building at Mt Ruapehu.

G. LYON (with thanks to Tony Christie, Ross Gainsford, Don Millward and others)