

## OBITUARY

### JOHN HERMAN (JACK) SORENSEN

New Zealand lost a noted ornithologist with the passing of John Herman Sorensen at Riverton on 27 October 1982. He was aged 77.

Born in Christchurch in 1905, Jack Sorensen moved with his family soon afterwards to Orepuki, Southland, where his Danish father worked as a gold miner, and where Jack first became interested in geology and natural history. He attended Orepuki School and later Southland Technical College, where he qualified as an engineer in both the gold and coalmining industries, a career which took him to many parts of Southland.

Jack was also a keen historian and took a great interest in the Southland Museum, located for a time at his old school, Southland Technical College, in its assembly hall. It was Jack Sorensen who prepared the plans for the new museum, which was eventually built in 1940 as a centennial memorial for the province, and it was he who became its first paid director.

The second world war found him selected as a member of the Cape Expedition — code name for the small highly secret force of New Zealanders occupying the Auckland and Campbell Islands to watch for enemy ships which could have found the islands' harbours invaluable staging-posts. Jack, part of the Campbell Island force, decided as always to make the most of his surroundings and devoted himself during his off-duty periods to the study of the island's natural history. In all, he spent more time there than anybody has, apart from shepherds during the island's sheep-farming days earlier in the century. Much of what we now know of the life histories of the island's birds, in particular of the Royal Albatross, is due to his studies. He meticulously recorded measurements and banded albatross over the years, working in surroundings that were always bleak and desolate and in a climate that was often inhospitable, gaining as a result the respect of his fellows for his total dedication to his work.

Jack Sorensen's research gave rise to two books, *Wildlife in the Sub-Antarctic* (1951) and, with Dr Bailey of Denver, Colorado, *Sub-Antarctic Campbell Island* (1962), plus numerous articles and papers.

After the war Jack completed his MSc degree at Victoria University while working in Wellington as a scientist with the then Marine Department. He retired to Winton in 1970, continuing his life-long studies in natural history. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter, and three grandchildren.

— R. W. Balham