



OBITUARY: MR E.J. SPEIGHT

E.J. (John) Speight died at his home in Christchurch on 22 January 1985, aged 84 years.

John Speight was born at Pukahu, Hawkes Bay in 1900. Before joining the Ministry of Works in 1927 he worked as a Surveyor in Hawkes Bay and with the Wellington City Council. John was one of an elite team of aerodrome builders, and such was his involvement in this programme that he obtained and held a pilot's licence.

When he was appointed to a position in Hydrology together with Alf Hopkins (Hoppy) in 1949 he was one of the first two leaders of Hydraulic Survey Parties in New Zealand. From a base in Blenheim he saw to the collection of hydrological data for the whole of the South Island. Always active in instrumentation, John was responsible for designing the standard gauging crane which is still used in New Zealand. His efforts also resulted in the manufacturers of Watts-Price Current Meters making significant improvements to those meters.

John established the present National Water and Soil Instrument Service Centre at Kainga in 1958. In 1961 he conducted the first National Hydrology Course in New Zealand. It was in this connection that he earned the nickname (of which he may have been unaware) of "Daddy Speight" by which he will be affectionately remembered for many years to come. In many ways this nickname appropriately recognises the fact that John was a father of the Hydrological Survey in New Zealand.

He retired from the Ministry of Works and Development in 1963. This was not retirement in any real sense, because he opened an instrument business and it was at his bench where John died at work in January 1985. He was a longstanding member of the Hydrological Society and attended its symposia even after retirement.

John Speight is survived by his wife, a son and two daughters.

*H.J. Freestone,
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