

WILLIAM SAYER, PLANT COLLECTOR

Don Lawie

William Sayer was commissioned by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, Victoria's Government Botanist, in 1886 to search for new plants in Northern Queensland. During a sea voyage along the Queensland coast the Baron had noted the similarity of the Bellenden Ker Range to some mountains in India that were rich in *Rhododendron* plants and he instructed Sayer to look for such plants – at that time unknown in Australia. Sayer visited the Barron Falls area and Harvey's Creek – which rises on the eastern slopes of the Bellenden Ker Range. He climbed Mount Bellenden Ker with his associate Davidson and did indeed find the first known specimens of an Australian native *Rhododendron* to which Baron Mueller gave the species name *lochae* after the wife of the Governor of Queensland.

Sayer had some adventures in the Bellenden Ker area including losing his boat and all his clothing and equipment during a trip along the Russell River – which also rises in the Bartle Frere-Bellenden Ker Range. Sayer discovered a number of plants new to science, and some were named after him. *Dracophyllum sayeri* occurs on the bleak upper slopes of Bellenden Ker while *Hollandaea sayeriana*, with beautiful Proteaceous flowers is endemic to the eastern slopes and foothills of the Bellenden Ker- Bartle Frere Range.



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JUNE 2014 EXCURSION REPORT WRIGHTS CREEK, KURANDA

Don Lawie

We ventured into the lower tablelands today, at an altitude of about 350 metres. After a productive second attempt at an AGM we set off for a ramble under the stern eye of our new President Boyd. We were in a mix of upland and lowland rainforest species, growing prolifically in volcanic soil and showing lingering signs of cyclone damage. As the walk progressed the soil changed to less fertile quartzite/schist and the vegetation accordingly altered to open savannah – *Eucalypts*, She Oak *Allocasuarina* and Cypress *Callitris* sp., with occasional *Banksia aquilonia*.



1 *Pittosporum rubiginosum*

The track was wide and clear, enabling us to ramble and comment on various finds. Stuart had his Instructor's Hat on today and passed on many gems of botanical knowledge to us, for example: a fallen *Davidsonia pruriens* leaf gave rise to discussion; the wings on the rachis were not sufficiently developed but Stuart said that they are not really winged but large teeth, so we became satisfied with the I.D. *Polyscias australiana* can be identified by the rusty appearance of the terminal bud – as Stuart pointed out with a small specimen – but, said Boyd what if the tree is ten metres high?

Some upland species noted were Brown Pine, *Podocarpus grayae* and Rose Butternut, *Blepharocarya involucrigera* which is commonly seen around Lake Eacham, and both these species occur in relict rainforest



JUNE EXCURSION REPORT

at Cattana Wetlands near Yorkeys Knob almost at sea level.

Just about every waitawhile, *Calamus* species was noted, with the notable exception of Fishtail Lawyer Vine *Calamus caryotoides* which is always a sign of altitude though it too is found at Cattana rainforest.

A few orchids were present – Pencil Orchid *Dendrobium teretifolium* high in the upper levels, *Bulbophyllum baileyi* snaking its way around a convenient tree trunk, and a couple of *Cymbidium madidum* saprophyting a

decaying log.



3 Fruit of *Pararistolochia deltantha*, a food plant for the Cairns Birdwing butterfly

Vines were prolific – Stuart pointed out both small-leaf and large-leaf *Tetracera* vines growing beside the track and October Glory Vine *Faradaya*

splendida, not far from flowering, but not as prolific here as in severely damaged rainforest in the Babinda area. Sarsaparilla Vine *Smilax australis* with pretty translucent red new leaves lurked, waiting to catch an unwary passerby with its rough spines all along the stem. Another ambusher was the friendly climber Supplejack,

Flagellaria indica, its leaf ends terminating in watch-spring coils. A species of *Aristolochia* vine presented one almost ripe fruit which differed from the usual *deltantha* or *tagala* (Editor's Note – Tony Roberts confirmed it as *Pararistolochia deltantha*) but the small leaves had the same "Velcro" habit.



4 Prickly lixie – *Alyxia oblongata*

We ran out of time before we reached Surprise Creek, so retraced our steps to the car park and voyaged home after yet another convivial and instructive outing in this wonderful outdoors.



4 View from Wright's Lookout

A fascinating piece of research from the ATH is soon to be published. The research takes another look at the old concept of refugia – special, forever-wet places around mountains and tablelands that have been protected from the withering effects of fire and drought for tens of millions of years. These places provided refuges for rainforest species, even during the extreme cool and drought of the last ice age some 20 000 years ago. In the Wet Tropics, it's believed refuges existed around the high mountains and on the Atherton Tablelands, providing a stable humid for ancient flowering plants that have gone extinct elsewhere. Plants like *Idiospermum*, the laurels, *Gymnostoma* and *Austorbaileya* are examples of these refugial species. The new work at the ATH looks at these refugia through the lens of DNA. By comparing the DNA of plant communities found within these supposed refugia, researchers found the wetter parts of the Atherton Tablelands contain many species with Gondwanan ancestors. But, up in the Daintree we find an undoubted refuge that contains a large number of species with southeast Asian ancestors. Examples are the mahoganies, the custard apple family and just about everything in coastal rainforest on sands. It's guessed that the Daintree lowlands were invaded by Asian species adapted to the warm lowlands during the last few million years. As climate has fluctuated over time, the rainforests have waxed and waned. Each time a wetter phase arose, the rainforests expanded across the lowlands, with an occasional opportunist from Asia entering the mix..

In May, Boyd suggested this works program for the Banks and Solander Gardens. Can we discuss?

Site selection: Completed. Site is running from current Banks/Solander down to Garden maintenance shed. See picture on next page.

ASAP: David to scan and forward GIS images of garden layout.

End of June: Irrigation, Soil imported and ameliorations complete. Currently underway, council staff.

Mid July: First Drafts of Interp signs completed, provided to Tony for standardisation in line with Gardens style. We will base all drafts on an A3 page, landscape layout. I feel 3 columns, mostly pictures would be a good start point for the layout?

May I be so bold as to suggest the following:

- Flecker: Tony to do, as he can simply chop something down from the gardens existing info.
- Banks/Solander: Tony to do
- Sayer: Don Lawie has done. Boyd to source photos and do layout and edit
- Cunningham: Boyd to do
- Cowley: Stu to do.
- Fitzalan: Stu to do

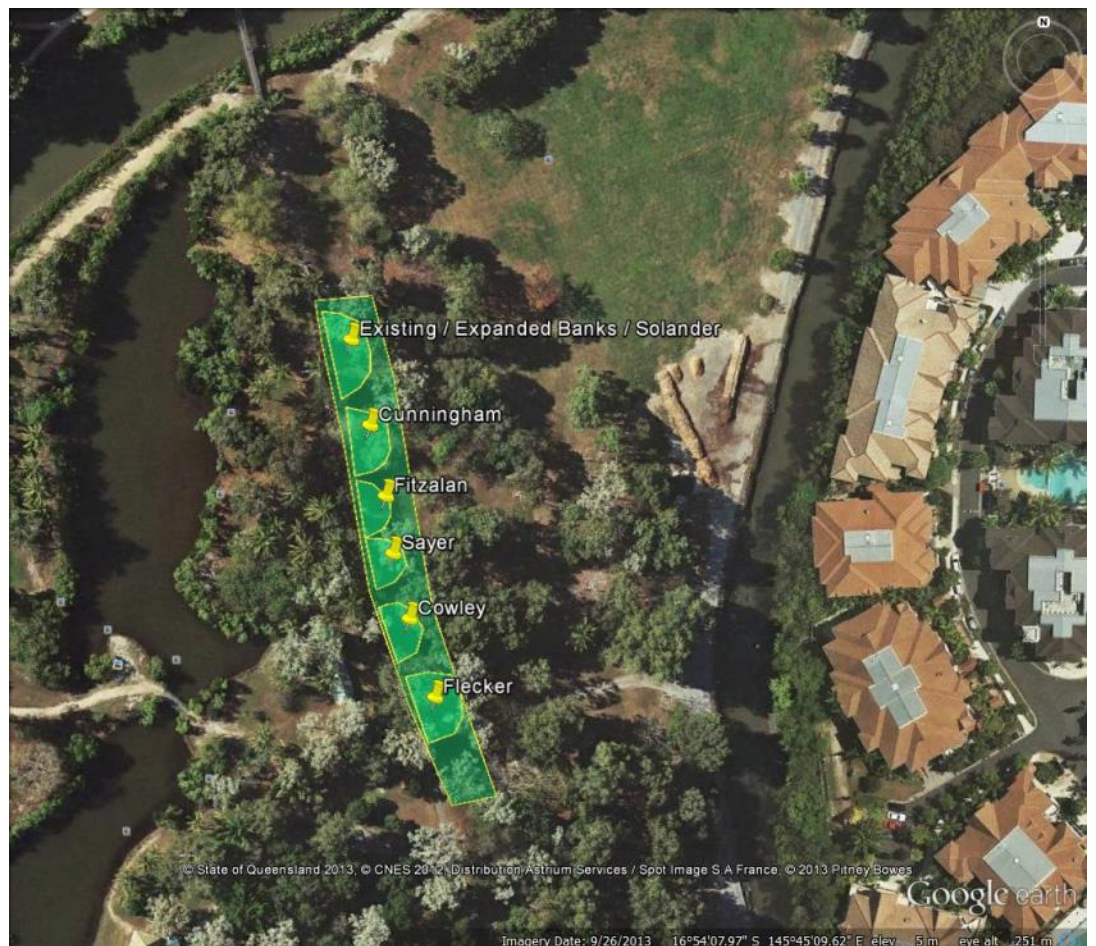
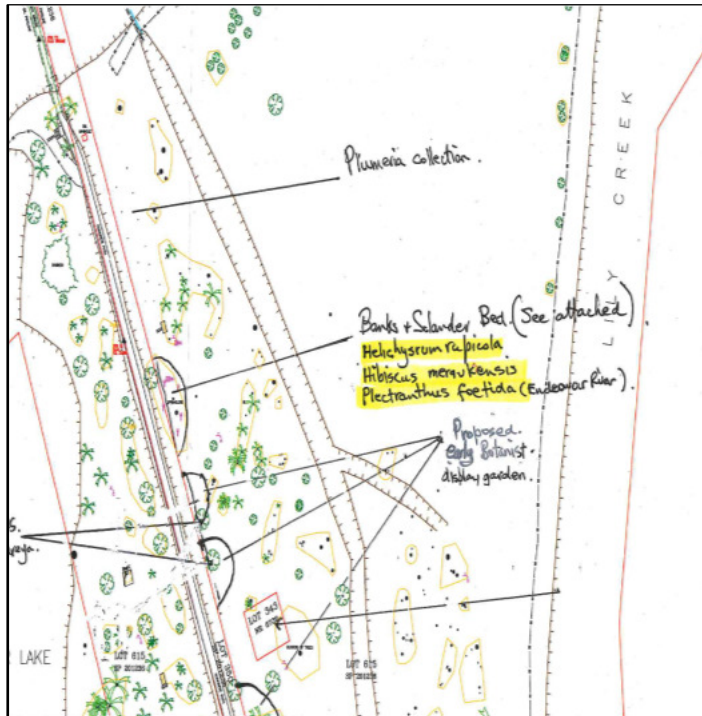
D. Warmington to advise if more / different explorers are preferred.

To begin immediately: Plant Sourcing

Boyd to approach Yuruga, CRC and council gardens to start sourcing and planning availabilities.

End of July: Exact plant layout for each bed and number of plants required finalised. Involving Tony, Boyd, David and Stu. Cocky apple and

Banks and Solander Gardens: For Discussion



other surplus trees removed.

Late August, Early September: Plant out gardens

We have a range of labour resources to consider as appropriate to scheduling. I would prefer one major planting rather than several small ones. We can organise attendance for:

- Cairns TAFE (weekdays)
- Treeforce Cairns (sundays preferred)
- SGAP volunteers
- Botanics Gardeners

Funding: I understand there is some money put aside by the gardeners to assist with this project, and plant purchase. Signage to be discussed between Gardens, SGAP and Gardeners.

We will have to move to get this in the ground, and looking good by the 250 year celebration of Banks and Solander's exploration of the east coast. Let me know if there are any holes in my planned schedule.



Upcoming Events

CAIRNS SGAP

Sunday 20th July

12 noon. Blue Arrow Walk. Meet at the start of the Blue Arrow/Red Arrow Walk on Collins Avenue, Edge Hill (downhill from the entrance to the Tanks Arts Centre).

Bring lunch, water and comfortable walking shoes.

TABLELANDS SGAP

Meetings on the **4th Wednesday of the month.**

Excursion the following Sunday.

Any queries, please contact Chris Jaminon on 4091 4565 or email hjaminon@bigpond.com

TOWNSVILLE SGAP

Meets on the **2nd Wednesday of the month**, February to November, in Annandale Community Centre at 8pm, and holds excursions the following Sunday.

See www.sgaptownsville.org.au/ for more information.

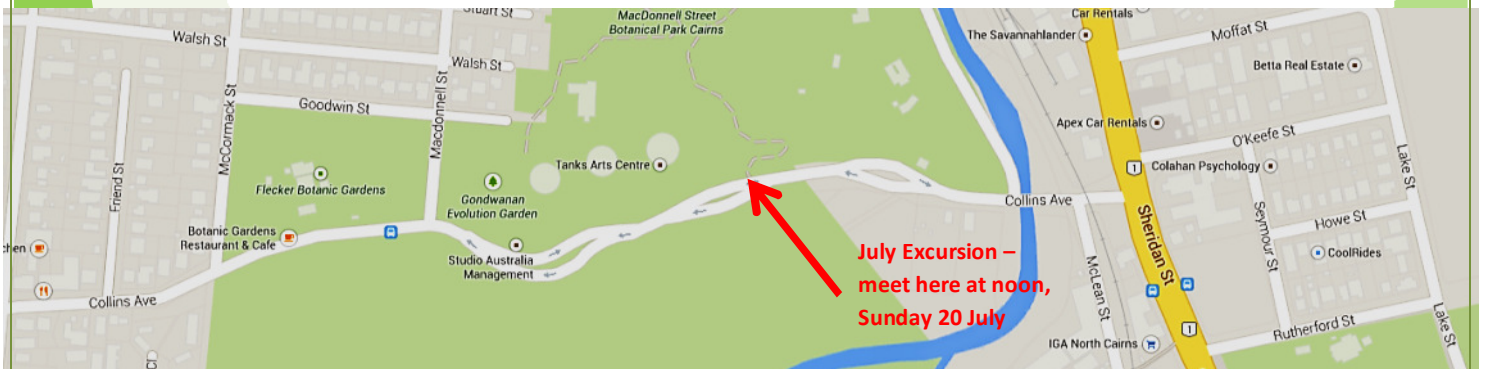
OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

18-20 July 2014

10th International Carnivorous Plants Conference is being held at our own Cairns Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre

Two public events are scheduled:

1. A book launch on Friday 18 July @ 3.00pm: Allen Lowrie's Carnivorous Plants of Australia, Magnum Opus
2. Saturday 19 July @ 12.00 pm: Public Presentation – Introduction and Cultivation of Carnivorous Plants (1 hour)



www.sgapcairns.org.au

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