



# SGAP Cairns

July 2012  
Newsletter 122

Society for Growing Australian Plants (Queensland Region) Inc., Cairns Branch  
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## Summer in Kew

*Tony and Trudi Roberts*

Tony and Trudi recently spent a long and pleasant summer day exploring Kew Gardens in London. They've sent through a few photos to share with SGAP Cairns. The photos make it clear that Kew is not just a garden – it's an institution devoted to public education, research and presentation of the best the botanical world has to offer.

## Upcoming Activities

SGAP CAIRNS BRANCH  
OUTING

21 July 2012

Behana Gorge. Meet at 10am at the Water Treatment Plant at the end of Behana Gorge Road. See map at the end of the newsletter for more details.

SGAP TABLELANDS BRANCH  
OUTING.

Sunday after the 4<sup>th</sup>  
Wednesday

Any queries please contact  
Chris Jaminon 4095 2882 or  
[hjaminon@bigpond.com](mailto:hjaminon@bigpond.com)

TOWNVILLE SGAP

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



Sculpture explaining root function.



Wollemi Pine at Kew. Already big enough to produce cones!



Whilst travelling life's path, stop and smell the roses.



Trudi on Kew's tree top walk.



Education – sculpture showing magnified xylem (the water conducting tissues that make up the majority of the wood of a tree).

The day ended with an investigation into the effects of *Saccharomyces*-mediated fermentation on aqueous extracts of *Hordeum vulgare* and *Humulus lupulus*. This activity is more commonly known as beer drinking.

## John Theodore Pentzcke

Rob Jago

*This article is one in an occasional series prepared by Rob Jago around the subject of early plant collectors in North Queensland.*

Born in Hanover Germany around 1829, Theodore Pentzcke arrived in Melbourne around 1850 at the age of twenty. While in Melbourne he made the acquaintance of Dr Ferdinand von Mueller. Within a few years of his arrival in Australia he succumbed to the lure of fortunes to be found on the Victorian Gold Fields and for the next thirty years moved from one rush to the next from Victoria to Queensland, earning a living as a carpenter, station hand, drover and gold miner. By May 1868 Pentzcke had worked his way north onto the gold fields of the Etheridge region in northern Queensland and from there to the Palmer River and the Hodgkinson goldfields edging ever closer to his final destination on the Daintree.

In June 1877, Pentzcke travelled with a party of miners from the Hodgkinson down the

track marked by Christie Palmerston to White Cliffs, some 12 kilometres to the south of Port Douglas. Not impressed with White Cliffs as a port they travelled north to Island Point, naming the small harbour they found at Pentzcke's suggestion "Port Salisbury", which was renamed in December 1877 by the Queensland Government as Port Douglas. Pentzcke settled in Port Douglas and earned a living as a carpenter building many of the early buildings in this new frontier town. Sometime between 1877 and 1881 Pentzcke "discovered" the Daintree and for the first time in his life put down roots and stayed; battling floods, isolation and the economic depression of the 1890's.

Pentzcke was among the first European settlers on the Daintree. His application for a homestead selection was received on the 21st of March 1882 at the Queensland Government Land Agent Office in Port Douglas. This application was for 150 acres described as Selection No. 133, Upper Daintree, Parish of Alexandra. This land is situated to the north of what is now Dagmar Street, Daintree and extended north to the large bend in the Daintree River. Pentzcke cleared around 6 acres on this land, erected a split slab house with a galvanised iron roof and planted coconuts, mangoes, oranges, lemons and coffee. This development fulfilled the conditions of the lease and he was granted full title to the land in April 1890. Pentzcke died an old man within the first few years of the twentieth century. He had no heirs and died without a will. His land was thus placed in the care of the Curator of Intestate Estates and eventually taken up by other settlers.

Pentzcke collected botanical specimens from the Daintree for fifteen years from 1881 until Mueller's death in 1896. Pentzcke's botanical contacts proved to be of value to the wider Daintree community when Dr Joseph Bancroft sent through the post a few sprigs of a promising grass introduced into Queensland from Java. This grass grew extremely well on

the moist alluvial flats of the Daintree and enabled the establishment of the early cattle grazing industry on the Daintree. This grass, which was locally known for many years as Pentzcke's Grass, is now commonly known as Para Grass (*Urochloa mutica*) and is now widely naturalized throughout the Wet Tropics. It is one of many introduced pasture grasses that have naturalized to become environmental weeds. Even as early as 1902 F.M. Bailey the Queensland Botanist noted that this grass was becoming naturalized.

## References

- Bailey, FM (1902) *The Queensland Flora*, 6: 1824.
- Franken, F (2008) *Daintree Selections, Early Years; Remembering the Douglas Shire*. Ed. P.W. Burden.
- Kerr, JD. Pentzcke, Forgotten Pioneer, Early days on the Daintree. , No. 28; September 1978.
- Kerr, JD. Northern Outpost; Mossman Central Mill Ltd.; 8 & 120 (1979)

## Request for Help

*Bev Kermond, a visitor, and member from Victoria, has asked we post the following request.*

I am a member of SGAP in Victoria (Maroondah Branch) and will be visiting Palm Cove from July 7 to 21. I'd love to know if there any accessible native gardens of interest which my husband and I could visit. I would be grateful if you have any suggestions. We have a hire car so are mobile. Many thanks, Bev (&Alan) Kermond.

Bev can be contacted by email: [bevkermond@gmail.com](mailto:bevkermond@gmail.com)

## June Excursion Report

Unfortunately we don't have a report for the excursion to Cooktown. However, Don Lawie has kindly provided an account of a recent trip with the Tablelands SGAP to the Herberton Range.

On Sunday 1 July Pauline and I braved the new world of Carbon Taxes and joined our Tablelands Branch colleagues in an excursion into the Herberton Ranges. We branched off the Kennedy Highway and followed Plath Road which took us through a beautiful rural area and then onto a well formed gravel road. We'd been along here some years previously and the roads eventually debouch onto Rolley Road Wondecla and thence to Herberton.

The trip quickly became an orchid spotter's delight. Open forest at an altitude of about 1,000 metres supports a surprisingly wide range of both terrestrial and epiphytic orchids, with finds coming thick and fast. First stop was at Drover's Lookout, which would have had panoramic views if the mist had blown away – well, this is the Herberton Ranges after all...

First find of the day was a number of flowering Orange Blossom Orchids – *Sarchochilus falcatus* – followed by not-yet-flowering *Dendrobium jonesii* in profusion. The latter flower towards the end of winter and the area becomes a wonderland of orchid inflorescences when the many *jonesii* plants bloom simultaneously. Also noted was a Christmas Orchid, *Calanthe triplicata*, one with a seed pod and another appearing to be in bud – very much out-of-season for this species.

Atherton Tablelands are noted for the abundance of species of minute *Bulbophyllum* orchids and today we saw quite few which got the orchidophiles speculating as to which particular species was present. *Phreatia crassiuscula* clustered all around a *Casuarina* as is their wont and *Dendrobium agrostophyllum* were present in numbers though not in flower. .

A roadside lunch and chats were enjoyed near Hall's Falls on North Nigger Creek and a road cutting was rich in terrestrials: *Malaxis latifolia*, *Caladenia carnea* in white and pink flowering form, *Geodorum neocaledonicum*, *Pterostylis* sp in flower and one of my favourites, the Mosquito Orchid *Acianthus borealis* [more on this species next month. Ed.].

Afternoon tea beside a mini-Barron Falls on the Upper Barron River, farewell to good friends Kay and Eric Coomber who are leaving the district and a pleasant 100km drive home completed a very good day.

## Articles Please!!!

If you have any original articles, or an idea for an article, please send them through. Suitable material includes:

- Excursion reports
- Book reviews
- Photos of plants in your garden that are flowering or fruiting.
- Photos and stories of interesting plants with horticultural potential.

### SGAP CAIRNS 2012 COMMITTEE

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### July Excursion - directions



Turnoff to Behana Gorge Road is 31.6 km south of Cairns. Follow the Bruce Highway through Gordonvale, past Walsh’s Pyramid. Behana Gorge Road is the first turn right after the Pyramid.

