

## CAIRNS SGAP CLIMB THE RED ARROW TRACK

Cairns' Botanic Gardens is a haven of green away from the urban rat race. Extensive landscaping over the last several years has transformed Collins Avenue into a world-class drive/walk. The Whitfield Range rises immediately beside the avenue and two bushwalking/fitness tracks are long-term features of the area. The Red Arrow is a steep route to a lookout site and the Blue Arrow diverges from the Red and is much longer and more strenuous.

We chose the Red, and lunched on the grassy verge of the avenue before commencing our adventure. The route winds through open lowland rainforest, and steeper sections feature extensive sets of strongly built wooden steps. They have to be strong since throughout our climb we were passed by an endless stream of joggers determinedly trotting up and down.

The track has had a few exotic trees planted. These are identified by name plates and the trees, being pan-tropical species, have settled in and are inconspicuous. There are name plates for some local species also – Blush Touriga, *Calophyllum sil* - an important timber tree - Damson Plum, *Terminalia sericocarpa*, which also rejoices in the name of Dead Dog Tree because of its unusual floral perfume, and on top of the range Cocky Apple,



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## JULY 2014 EXCURSION REPORT

BY DON LAWIE

*Planchonla careya*. A currently dry watercourse had a large clump of Brown Tamarind, *Castanospora albandii*, seedlings – the parent tree had dropped its fruit higher up, they had been washed down and lodged when the flow diminished, then germinated profusely. Brown Tamarind fruit are preferred Cassowary tucker but alas, they have not been seen in this area for some years.

Fishtail Lawyer Vine was prominent in places, reaching out to grab a jogger's ankles but we saw no other *Calamus* species. The top of the track overlooks the General Aviation area of Cairns Airport and the view extends out over Trinity Inlet to East Trinity. A little further along the crest the view was directly down the streets of inner-city Cairns. Here, an historic marker shows a stone wall built as part of a wartime observation platform, part of Cairns' recent history.

Stuart pointed out a fascinating climber, *Abroma mollis*, in a sunny area, showing pretty flowers and a weird fruit which opened out to saucer size with fine itch-making hairs. Good to look at but not a plant for a suburban garden.

A large, and becoming larger, patch of exotic Fishpole Bamboo, *Phyllostachys aurea*, clogged a large area of the downhill walk. First planted for its

edible shoots and useful pole stems, this Bamboos has become a menace everywhere it has become established.

A small and struggling specimen of the host plant for the Cairns Birdwing Butterfly, *Aristolochia delatantha*, scrambled over a fallen limb beside track and there are doubtless other specimens in the vicinity.

Just about a year ago we climbed the lower slopes of The Pyramid south of Gordonvale, and Boyd arrived early, climbed high and then came down to us struggling along. This year he repeated his endurance feat, jogging up the track from the reverse side and finding us as we were in the early stages of the climb. Oh, to be young and strong again!

On return to Collins Avenue we tarried for afternoon tea and a show and tell discussion of some plant specimens, then parted after another interesting, social and informative day in our wonderful Wet Tropics habitat.

More photos – page 5



The Australian Tropical Herbarium is fortunate to be involved with the operation of the Daintree Rainforest Observatory. Central to the DRO is the canopy crane, a massive German “Liebhert” construction crane that provides vertical access to nearly a hectare of lowland tropical rainforest. From this crane, James Cook University and visiting researchers are able to undertake a variety of research projects that would previously have required difficulty and dangerous access using ropes and tree spikes. Researchers at the site work on everything from canopy mammals, to ants feeding on plant secretions, to studies of the effects light intensity on canopy photosynthesis. An osprey family has built its nest on the end of the boom. They’re constantly spinning home offers the best views in the Daintree.



New accommodation and labs at the DRO site



Crane structure, with climate monitoring instruments

# Banks and Solander Beds News

Boyd, Tony and Stuart met on Monday night to discuss the development of the Banks and Solander Beds at Cairns Botanic Gardens.

The launch date of the Banks and Solander beds at the Cairns Botanic Gardens will be Thursday 2 October, to coincide with the biennial conference of the Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand.

To get things ready in time, we’ll have to get things underway immediately. We have planned a short working bee on Saturday 17 August to mark out the two beds dedicated to Banks on Solander – all are welcome. We’re starting with coffee at the Coffee Bean, (Botanic Gardens Coffee Shop) at 9:30 am.

I understand the Botanic

Gardens will assist with site preparation and irrigation.

We’ll also finalise the plants needed so that we can get a quote from Yuruga Nursery. If anyone has any plants from the Banks and Solander list (see below) they can provide, can you let Plants will need to be in place by mid-September, so they’re properly established for the conference.

Important dates:

- 17 August  
Mark out beds.
- Mid-late August  
Gather plants.
- 30 August  
(to be confirmed)  
informal SGAP trip to Yuruga Nursery.
- 7 / 14 September  
(to be confirmed)  
Planting day.
- 2 October  
Launch of Banks and Solander beds at the BGANZ conference.

## List of plants selected for Banks and Solander Beds

### FERNS

*Davallia denticulata*  
*Pyrrosia longifolia*

### FLOWERING PLANTS

*Acacia leptocarpa*  
*Clerodendrum floribundum* var. *floribundum*  
*Coronidium rupicola*  
*Cyperus cristulatus*  
*Dendrobium discolor*  
*Dendrobium canaliculatum*  
*Dillenia alata*  
*Dodonaea polyandra*  
*Dodonaea viscosa* subsp. *angustifolia*  
*Ficus opposita*  
*Grevillea parallela*  
*Grevillea pteridifolia*  
*Hibiscus meraukensis*  
*Hybanthus enneaspermus*  
*Leea indica*

*Leptaspis banksii*  
*Lomandra banksii*  
*Melastoma malabathricum* subsp. *malabathricum*  
*Neoroepera banksii*  
*Pittosporum ferrugineum*  
*Thryptomene oligandra*

This is the list developed in our first meeting of the year, and published in the March newsletter. Other plants collected by Banks and Solander at Cape Grafton include:

*Alyxia spicata*  
*Sarcostemma viminalis* subsp. *brunonianum*  
*Canarium australasicum*  
*Gmelina dalrympleana*  
*Plectranthus apreptus*  
*Litsea breviumbellata*  
*Solanum viridifolium*  
*Piper caninum*

I was interested to read a short biographical piece on Eugene Fitzalan in the last newsletter. It reminded me of a mystery - part botany, part biogeography, part local history and part detective story that took me a quarter of a century to solve. The solution finally came last year and I thought readers might be interested.

I first arrived in Bowen in 1989 at the height of the palm craze and one of my workmates had a palm nursery and subscribed to *Palms and Cycads*. I was leafing through one of these (#36 July-Sept, 1992) when I found an article by Robert Tucker entitled *The Bowen Corypha*. It was a lyrical piece that noted of Bowen "ugliness abounds in the built environment". It then got to a "mystery" as to the origin of a clump of *Corypha utan* near Queens Beach. It is apparently 500 km from the nearest naturally occurring stands on the Gulf and Cape. It was estimated that the clump was at least fifty years old. The locals could offer the author no information on the clump and he opined that "it seems almost certain that the Bowen *Corypha* are a deliberate planting".

I thought about this a lot over the years but Bowen

## Beautiful trees of North Queensland: Eugene Fitzalan and Bowen's *Corypha* *Corypha utan*, ARECACEAE

by Ian Walker

is a tough nut to crack and three Bowenites will invariably offer four strongly held and disparate opinions on anything. Twenty years passed by and one day an elderly citizen mentioned "Fitzalan's Gardens". Questioning her as to what and where these were didn't reveal much and the waters were muddied further when a second old timer offered a considerably different story. It was agreed, however, that Eugene Fitzalan had planted an extensive garden that was formerly a landmark behind Queens Beach. It no longer exists, probably falling prey to a combination of drought, clearing, urbanisation and neglect. I instantly thought of the *Corypha* as possibly being a remnant of that garden. The two locations I had for the garden were indistinct and kilometres apart. If I could link the clump's location with Eugene then that would go a long way to solving the origins of the palms.

The Bowen Historical Society publishes pamphlets on various subjects and I recalled I'd seen one on Eugene Fitzalan so I went to see if it was still available. I was overjoyed to find a copy for sale but deflated when none of the thirty-two pages gave the slightest hint as to where he'd lived in Bowen. However the palms stand opposite the showground's main gate and nearby is Fitzalan Street so things seemed to be coming together but it still wasn't as definitive as I'd have liked.

More time passed and then one day at work I looked a little closer at an old framed 1921 cadastral map of the Parish of Pring and there was a thirty-seven and a half acre block owned by H. Fitzalan that encompassed the position of the *Corypha* clump. Herbert was Eugene's son who remained in Bowen after Eugene left for Cairns and they had co-owned a block of land in Bowen. The solution had been

under my nose for years. Eugene was an enthusiastic creator of gardens as well as a professional botanical collector and it seemed natural that he had planted these spectacular palms either from seed he'd collected on one of his trips farther north to their natural habitat, from seed sent by a fellow enthusiast or he'd sent seed to Herbert who remained in Bowen some decades after his father had left. While Eugene lived in Cairns he would have been much closer to the palm's natural distribution.

Eugene owned land in Bowen from the 1870s so the clump could be up to 140 years old. The palms are monocarpic (they flower once and then die) and I have seen a number of flowers in my time in Bowen so the current clump are descendants of the original planting. I wondered about inbreeding depression but I suspect that they are fully self-compatible. They are a long-lived species (staying in the rosette stage for fourteen to twenty years alone) and a flower is such a rare event that except for in very large populations they would usually self-fertilise. Alternatively, such a long generation time means that inbreeding depression won't become evident for centuries.



I photographed the clump this morning (above): there is a full range of plants from vegetative to flowering to fruiting to a dead stump. I had to negotiate waist high para grass that grows next to them and there is a shallow temporary watercourse nearby which agrees well with descriptions of their natural habitat. The 1921 Parish of Pring map (below) shows H. Fitzalan's block in the centre bottom with Mt Nutt (shown as Mt Nuts) at the top. Queens Beach lies beyond Mt Nutt.





*Dianella bambusifolia*



*Lepidozamia hopei*



*Coralie and Don enjoy the romantic view over Cairns Airport*



*Bizarre and beautiful – flower of Abroma mollis*



# Upcoming Events

## CAIRNS SGAP

### Saturday 16 August 2014

9:30 am. Coffee Bean Coffee Shop at Cairns Botanic Gardens. Survey and mark Banks & Solander Beds.

### Sunday 17 August 2014

12 noon. Native street trees of Cairns, Mark 2.

Meet @ War Memorial on Cairns Esplanade, across the road from the RSL. Bring lunch, a sun hat and a little bit of pocket money for an ice cream at the end of the walk.

## TABLELANDS SGAP

Meetings on the **4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month.**

Excursion the following Sunday.

Any queries, please contact Chris Jaminon on 4091 4565 or email [hjaminon@bigpond.com](mailto:hjaminon@bigpond.com)

## TOWNSVILLE SGAP

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

See [www.sgaptownsville.org.au/](http://www.sgaptownsville.org.au/) for more information.

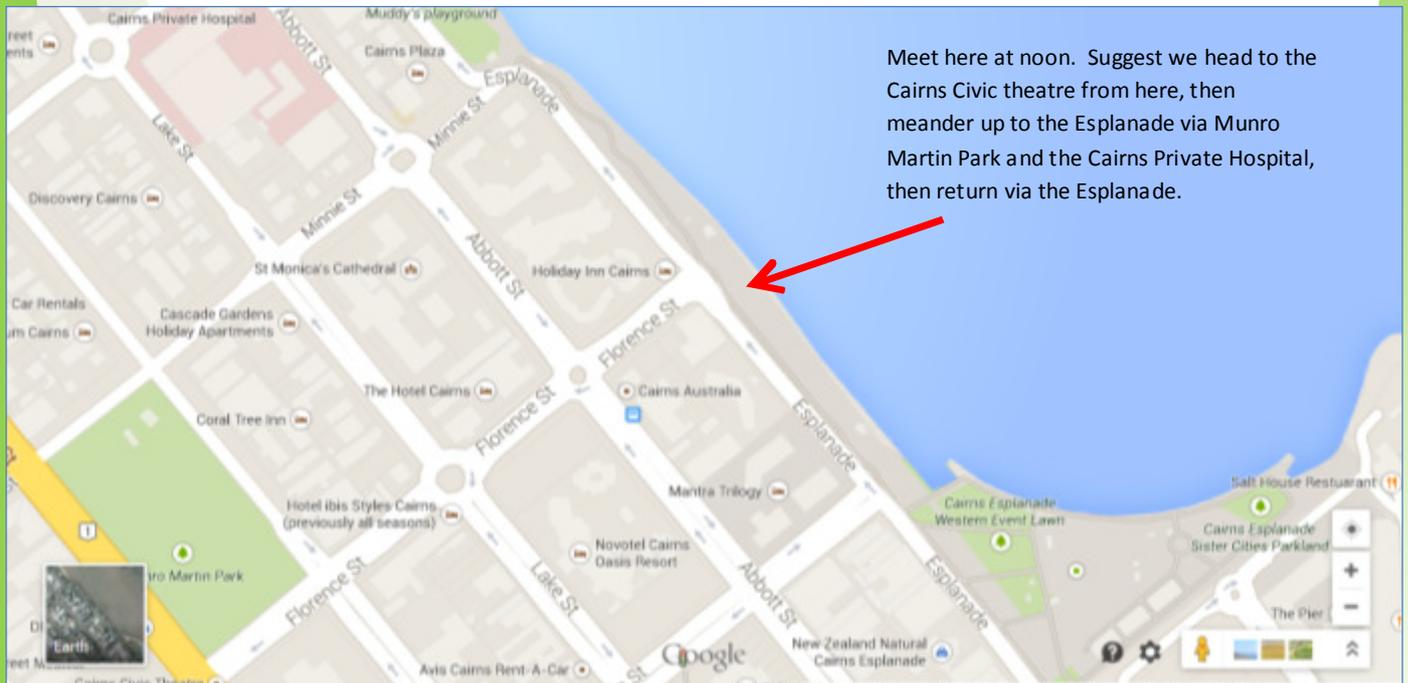
## OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

### 2 October 2014

2014 Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ) Biennial Conference to be held in Cairns.

Launch of the Banks and Solander Beds at the Cairns Botanic Gardens.

See <http://www.cairnsbotanicgardens.com.au/whats-on/2014-bganz-qld-state-conference> for more information.



Meet here at noon. Suggest we head to the Cairns Civic theatre from here, then meander up to the Esplanade via Munro Martin Park and the Cairns Private Hospital, then return via the Esplanade.

## SGAP CAIRNS 2014 COMMITTEE

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