

# THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

October 2012

Published by the  
Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)  
P.O. Box 500, Brentford Square, Victoria 3131  
Email: [secretary@vicrhodo.org.au](mailto:secretary@vicrhodo.org.au)  
Telephone: 0418 340 240  
Editor: Simon Begg Ph: (03) 9751 1610  
email: [simonwbegg@gmail.com](mailto:simonwbegg@gmail.com)  
ARSV Website: [www.vicrhodo.org.au](http://www.vicrhodo.org.au)  
Picture site <http://picasaweb.google.com/ARSVic>



## 2012 PROGRAMME

NB The Rhododendron Newsletter will be produced quarterly this year. Issues will be sent out by email or post in January, April, July & October. Contributions would be greatly appreciated.

Committee meetings will be held at 5.00pm before General Meetings & as necessary.

General Meetings are held at the Municipal Horticultural Centre, Jolimont Rd, Vermont. Mel 62 G4 unless otherwise stated.

### FOUR GENERAL MEETINGS AT NUNAWADING: 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday 8.00PM

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup></li><li>• JUNE 15<sup>TH</sup></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SEPTEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup></li><li>• NOVEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup> <u>AGM</u></li></ul> |
|--|---|

### FOUR WORKSHOPS AT THE NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDENS; 2.00PM

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FEBRUARY Sunday 19<sup>th</sup></li><li>• MAY Sunday 20<sup>th</sup></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AUGUST Sunday 19<sup>th</sup></li><li>• OCTOBER Sunday 7<sup>TH</sup></li></ul> |
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## OCTOBER 2012

### NEWSLETTER

**FRIDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> – SUNDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> NATIONAL COUNCIL AGM AND GARDEN VISITS AT EMU VALLEY RHODODENDRON GARDEN, BURNIE TASMANIA. ALL WELCOME.**

## NOVEMBER 2012

**RHODODENDRON SHOW:** No show this year.

**SUNDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> – 2.00pm.** Garden visit to the home of Clare Rouse. Andrew Rouse's mother has very kindly invited ARSV members to visit her garden at 8 Stonehaven Court, Toorak.

**FRIDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> 8.00PM AGM AT NUNAWADING**

## DECEMBER 2012

**SUNDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> from 12.00PM** – Christmas lunch at the National Rhododendron Gardens. BYO everything, BBQ supplied. Enter by rear entrance and park near lunch room or Park's office.

## **PRESIDENTS REPORT OCTOBER 2012**

Dear members,

This Presidents report will touch on the very enjoyable and successful North Queensland Expedition (a report covering this is in this newsletter), the work in the nursery at Olinda, the continuing role of the society in the Gardens at Olinda and questions where to for our branch of the ARS.

September saw a group of ARS members involved in an expedition to North Queensland to observe the *Rhododendrons lochiaie and viriosum* in their native habitat. The expedition members included two from Adelaide (Rob and Jackie Hatcher), Ian Chalk from Emu Valley Gardens in Tasmania and six ARSV members. The Victorian members being Simon and Marcia Begg, Prue Crome, Dan MacLeod, Andrew Rouse and myself. Not every member got to the location of every Rhododendron population, but overall the expedition examined four mountain top populations and it would have to be deemed a huge success. I'll leave you to read the expedition report and look at the photos in this newsletter and let you decide if you agree. The expedition proved to be an enormously enjoyable activity for the participants. It is a great joy travelling with people who share the same interests. The members had an interest in plants in general not just Rhododendrons. How else could you convince others to join you on a drive that took all afternoon just to look at a wattle which grows only 150mm high and has purple flowers (*Acacia purpureapetala* at Irvinebank) or trek through leach infested rainforest just to see some rare tall trees (*Stockwellia quadrifida*) and still think you had had a good day.

The expedition was a prime example of things the ARS needs to be involved in, it brings members across Australia together, provides interest to existing members and hopefully attracts new members.

Alex Pottage has made an enormous difference to the nursery at Olinda, she has introduced a level of order and structure which was desperately needed. These changes and the new propagator, which is producing very good results with cuttings, seedlings and we are now finding with grafted plants placed underneath the benches as well, have significantly improved our ability to produce good quality plants both for sale and more importantly for our members. With a new propagating year about to start then I would hope that members make the most of our new facilities, either by using them themselves or let one of the committee know what you would like grown.

Last quarter's newsletter contained the thoughts of Kenneth Cox about the Gardens. I thought his views were both dated and more negative than was necessary. Many of his negative points are already being addressed and progress is being made. His comments about the role of the ARS at the Gardens being to concentrate on specific sectors such as labelling, Australian hybrids and species, has been the case for many years. I would throw into that mix, that the establishment of the new vireya house at the Gardens (still progressing) is a project that would only ever happen because the ARSV is doing it. I argue that the current arrangement between Parks Victoria and the ARSV, works to benefit both parties and that both parties recognize this.

There are numerous projects being undertaken or could be undertaken by the ARSV at the Gardens and the Tuesday volunteers group in particular continues to do its part to develop the Gardens. This does however raise the issue of members helping in the Gardens. The Tuesday volunteers group is a very educational and enjoyable activity, it is however in need of some new blood. If it's the weekday, or Tuesday in particular, timing of volunteer work in the Gardens that is stopping you from joining in then we can address that. It's a discussion that can and will be had at next months AGM.

Other discussion points that I hope people will think about for next months AGM are:

\*Meetings at Nunawading, do we still have them seeing as how they are so poorly attended?

\*More garden visits? Is that what members would like? (see Program for details of a visit to Clare Rouse's garden on Sunday 11/11/12 @ 2pm)

\*How do we get more members or more to the point how do we get members to be more involved?

**John O'Hara**

### **PRESIDENTS REPORT TO BRANCH NEWSLETTERS OCTOBER 2012**

I am writing this having been back from our far North Queensland experience for a few weeks .

As some of you may have heard our initial start came to an abrupt end near Moomba in far north South Australia. The vehicle we were in, my sons Toyota Hi-lux 4WD, rolled over (twice) and as a consequence Jacki and I spent a very uncomfortable 12 hours being checked out for spinal injuries etc. Miraculously we had no major injuries. A slight pain in my shoulder and a cut and swollen ring finger on Jackis right hand were it. The vehicle however was a write off.

Restart via flights home from Broken Hill to begin with, after being released from the Broken Hill hospital, and then booking flights to Cairns and a hire car, we got to Malanda on Friday to meet up with the other members of the expedition.

After a bit of getting to know each other we headed off to Mt Lewis on Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> of September.

Rather than give a detailed report of the whole expedition I will leave that to the more detailed combined effort that will eventually be circulated.

What I will say is that the second leg of the expedition up Mt Bartle Frere is the most physically challenging yet rewarding experiencing I can recall. This may be because it is so fresh.

Seeing *Rhododendron viriosum* at Mt Lewis and *Rhododendron lochiaie* on Mt Bartle Frere will always rate as high achievements in my life. Seeing Rhododendrons growing in their natural state always has given me a buzz but seeing our own species was a very uplifting experience.

We will work toward getting collection permits but this will entail negotiating with Aboriginal communities as well as the Queensland bureaucracy.

I hope to see some of you at Emu Valley but I give you some news for next year's convention in Adelaide. Steve Hootman from the Rhododendron Species Foundation has

agreed to come and address us as the Allan Kerr grant Memorial Lecturer which will combine with our convention next year in late October. For those of you who do not know Steve, he is one of the most knowledgeable men in the world on Rhododendron species (and a great bloke to boot).

Please do not hesitate to email me if you have any thoughts that will improve our Society.

Regards

**Rob Hatcher**

### THE SPECIES COLUMN.

***Rex Ssp.fictolacteam*** -Subsection Falconera. [Photo page 13]

The “Big-leaf” rhododendrons are classified into two main groups, namely:

\*The Grandia Subsection have large leaves up to 70cm. long with a plastered or silvery indumentum underneath.

\*The Falconera Subsection have leaves up to 46cm. long with a shiny upper surface and a woolly indumentum below composed of tiny cup-shaped hairs.

All of the Falconeri Subsection are spectacular in foliage and flower, and grow remarkably well at Olinda, although you might have to wait 10 years before flowering.

#### **Name:**

Named *rex*, meaning king.

*fictolacteam* is something of a misnomer, meaning false *lacteam*, however it clearly belongs in the Falconera Subsection.

#### **Distribution:**

South Sichuan and neighbouring N.E.Yunnan, at 3000 to 4300 metres, in conifer or mixed forests.

#### **Characteristics:**

*fictolacteam* grows up to a height of 12 metres but usually less in cultivation. The leaves are dark green, up to 30 cm. long and 11 cm. wide, with a beautiful soft fawn indumentum on the underside. The flowers are very impressive, forming a large truss of up to 30 white flowers, deep purple in the throat, and are freely produced in early September. This Subspecies is closely related to *rex*, but differs in its smaller leaves and flowers.

#### **Selected Forms.**

Both *rex* and *fictolacteam* are highly regarded in England, although there is some confusion over the correct names;

*rex* F.C.C. 1935 (as *fictolacteam*) flowers white with deep crimson blotch.

*rex* A.M. 1946 (as *fictolacteam* v. *roseum*) flowers pale rose.

*rex* A.M. 1955 flowers white with crimson blotch.

*fictolacteam* A.M. 1923 flowers white with crimson blotch.

*fictolacteam* A.M.1953 Flowers white flushed pink.

#### **Where to See These Plants:**

In the rhododendron garden we have two plants of *rex* (planted in 1977) and six plants of

ssp. *fictolacteum* (planted from 1965 to 1999). There are two excellent plants of *fictolacteum* near the lower end of the main rockery (near the creek) which flower every year in September. Most of the older “big-leaf” varieties are planted down the Lyrebird walk on the wet and slippery bank, which is their ideal environment.

**Alan Kepert.**

### **VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN**

***R viriosum and R lochiaie*** [photographs pages 13 & 14]

Much of this issue is taken up with ARS' expedition to North Queensland to view these plants. They come from disjunct populations in small colonies on, mostly, rocky outcrops at or near the tops of North East Queensland mountains. The expedition was greatly assisted by Mary Gandini, Australian Tropical Herbarium, Cairns now retired but still a volunteer at ATH. She has personally visited all the known sites for her 2002 paper *An investigation of Rhododendron lochiaie F. Muell. Its taxonomy, distribution and genetic variance*. The expedition visited only four sites, two each of *R lochiaie* and *R viriosum*. It can speak only of these sites.

Even this very limited, on ground, experience of these plants requires some modification of their description in Argent *Rhododendrons in subgenus Vireya* RHS 2006, 324-6. Clearly further expeditions are needed, when permits to collect these plants can be obtained, to collect them from all the known sites and seek to do so from potential or reputed other sites. There should be properly provenanced examples from every known site grown in identical conditions *ex situ* to compare. Also the further genetic studies into these plants being undertaken by Dr Mark Harrington [Australian Tropical Herbarium, Cairns and Mary's research successor in respect of these plants] in consultation with Lyn Craven [Australian National Herbarium, Canberra] and Dr Sue Gardiner [Principal Scientist, Plant Gene Mapping, The Horticulture and Food Research Institute of New Zealand Limited] need to be completed. Only then can their descriptions confidently be given. Whether the final verdict is, as now, two species, or only one species or more than two species, there will certainly be variations between each colony as already reported by Mary Gandini and, according to anecdotal reports, within colonies. With the final verdict there should also be a better informed view as to how these plants arrived in Australia, and when, and why they survive clinging precariously to their crags when they can be grown successfully in cultivation as garden plants thousands of kilometers to the south in Australia's southern States. What prevents them from migrating into rain forest or up trees at all but a few sites? There will also be full descriptions at each site. Importantly rumors of the existence of *Vireya* in the Iron Range North of Cooktown or white or yellow forms off shore or in Southern Queensland mountains should be debunked or established as fact. Argent describes *R viriosum* at Mt Spurgeon as epiphytic in the tops of large *Eugenia* trees. Expedition guides to Mt Lewis confirmed this and also reported epiphytic *R viriosum* on Windsor Tableland which is, as the crow flies, close by. There may be other epiphytic plants elsewhere but the expedition neither saw any, nor were told of any. Our Mt Lewis guides, we thought, would have known.

The expedition visit to Bells Peak North was an expedition highlight. Not only did it confirm *R lochia* there but found widespread flowering there in early September, earlier than Argent states October-December. Perhaps this year is exceptional. The Cairns bushwalking Group, expedition guides to this site, discovered these plants for the first time [for them] but will now keep an eye on them. There may well be 6.5m *R lochia* as Argent states but the expedition saw none anywhere near as tall as this. The expedition did see umbels with as many as 12 florets. There are 10 in one of the photos in this issue. More than the 2-6 Argent states. At Mt Lewis *viriosum* was at least 3m long, on occasion, but very close to the ground all the way. Tall it was not. In cultivation in present day Olinda I can confirm *R lochia* is much more erect and taller than *R viriosum* from whatever site. It is also free flowering, just as *R viriosum* is, but not as deep a shade of red. But the Bells Peak form of *R lochia* appears from photos to be darker red than plants in Olinda. In Olinda, as in the wild, *R lochia* flowers earlier than *R viriosum* though their flowering times overlap. As it happens I have flowers on both *R lochia* and *R viriosum* [Devils Thumb form] as I write. In cultivation my tallest *R lochia* is 1 1/2m and my tallest *R viriosum* half that. Expedition guides from ATH reported flowering of *R viriosum* October to December compared with the usual times in Olinda of December to early February. March, as Argent suggests is usual, is in fact late and exceptional. I suggest *R lochia* usually flowers at least a month earlier in both locations than *R viriosum*.

**SWB**

**AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY – Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)**

**NOMINATION FORM for the Term 2012-2013**

**Nomination for the election of Officers and Ordinary Committee Members to be held at the Annual General Meeting on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012. All parties must be financial members of ARSV.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ of  
\_\_\_\_\_

nominate \_\_\_\_\_

for the position of: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by Proposer: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Seconder, \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by Seconder: \_\_\_\_\_

Nomination dated: \_\_\_\_\_

**ACCEPTANCE**

I accept the above nomination.

Signed by Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominations must be received by the Secretary, M.Hare, no later than Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012.  
At P.O. Box 500 Brentford Square, 3131 Victoria, Australia.

# AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

## Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)

### NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 16<sup>th</sup> NOV. 2012

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z), will be held on Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup> 2012, at the Whitehorse Horticultural Centre, 84 Jolimont Road, Forest Hill (Melway Ref: 62 G4), commencing at 8.00pm.

The business of the meeting shall be:

- to confirm the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011;
- to receive from the Committee, reports upon the transactions of the Branch during the last Financial year;
- to elect Officers of the Branch, and the Ordinary Members of the Committee;
- to receive and consider the Statements of Income and Expenditure and Assets and Liabilities for the last Financial Year;
- to elect an Auditor;
- to conduct such other business of which notice is given in accordance with the Branch Rules.

All positions of Officers of the Branch shall fall vacant under Rule 22 (3) and are to be filled by election.

The Officers are: President, Vice-President (1), Vice-President (2), Secretary and Treasurer. Three positions, numbers 1, 2 and 3m, of Ordinary Committee Member fall vacant by rotation, each for a three year term in accordance with Rule 23 (3). In addition there are other vacancies for a 1 or 2 year period. Retiring Officers and Ordinary Members of Committee are eligible to stand for re-election.

Please note that **ONLY** financial members of the Branch are allowed to vote at elections - **ONE Vote per Membership**.

Nominations of candidates for election shall be in writing, signed by two members of the Branch and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate, and shall be delivered to the Secretary of the Branch not less than seven (7) days before the Annual General Meeting. The Nominee, Proposer and Secunder must all be financial members of the Branch at the time of signing.

Nominations, which close at 5.00pm on Friday, November 9<sup>th</sup> 2012, should be sent to the Secretary, A.R.S. - Victorian Branch (Inc.), P.O. Box 500, Brentford Square, 3131.

A copy of the "Statement of Purposes", and the "Rules of the Australian Rhododendron Society - Victorian Branch Incorporated (A5896Z)" may be obtained on application to the Branch Secretary.

An example of a suitable Nomination Form is immediately before this Notice.

**Michael Hare,**  
**Secretary**



**Laser Engraver acquired by Parks, ARSV and Friends of Tindale**

## **MANAGER'S UPDATE – NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDENS, OLINDA**

### **David Adeson, Manager Dandenong Ranges Gardens, Parks Victoria**

The start of a new financial year brings with it much reviewing and planning; review of what we've achieved over the past year, and planning for what we want to achieve in the year(s) ahead. With our 2012-13 works program well underway, and in light of the observations tabled by Kenneth Cox in the July 2012 newsletter, I thought it timely to provide ARS Victoria members with an update on the exciting developments at the National Rhododendron Gardens in the 2 years since Kenneth Cox's visit, and share our vision for the future.

I would begin by first acknowledging the very positive and cooperative relationship between the ARS and Parks Victoria in the management of the garden. The ARS deliver a tremendous amount of work annually through their Tuesday volunteer group. In 2011-12, the ARS provided almost 2,000 hours of invaluable volunteer work in the garden, and we are very grateful for the passion, knowledge and effort they invest every week.

I'm also very pleased with the recent initiatives the ARS has initiated over the last 12 months, and the partnership approach we have taken in their delivery. John O'Hara mentioned these in his July 2012 report, but I believe it's worth highlighting:

- the joint contribution by Parks Victoria, the ARS and the Friends of Tindale Garden to the purchase of a laser engraver and cutting machine, to enable us to produce professional botanic labels in-house and improve labelling throughout the gardens;
- the ARS's investment to renovate the glass house for conversion into a new Vireya House, which will create a fantastic new feature and improve the visitor experience for the garden;
- the ARS-led botanic expedition to Northern Queensland in September 2012 which the ARS sponsored Dan McLeod, a Parks Victoria horticulturalist to attend. This and future expeditions aim to develop the Vireya collection in the garden to hopefully be one of the best in the world.



All these initiatives demonstrate a great working relationship between Parks Victoria and the ARS and a shared vision for the future development of the garden.

We have a passionate team of 7 gardeners based at the National Rhododendron Gardens, all of whom love the garden and actively contribute to the planning of works and new developments. The 2012-13 year will see us working on several key projects aimed at improving the professionalism of our botanic management practices and the diversity of collections in the garden. These include:

- Implementation of a spatial-based botanic database which will enable us to map our collections using GPS locations. This will provide critical information we need to effectively manage our collections, share plant data with botanic partners to inform global conservation efforts, and inform the roll-out of improved botanic labelling across the gardens.
- Development of a new Southern China collection as part of a duplication project in partnership with RBG Melbourne. The collection will include complete provenance details and contribute to preservation of IUCN Red List species.
- Commence design and Stage 1 plantings of a new Yarra Ranges alpine collection beneath Serenity Point. The collection will represent the indigenous plants of the region and emulate them in a garden context.
- Planting of new Protea beds as an extension to the existing Protea garden, with plants kindly donated by Protea Flora.

Looking beyond this year, I'd like to share Parks Victoria's thoughts on the future of the garden. Over the last couple years, a lot of work has gone into developing a 15 year Strategic Management Plan for the Dandenong Ranges Gardens, including the National Rhododendron Gardens. The Plan, which is currently in Draft and pending approval to release for public comment, was prepared following consultation with the community and key stakeholders including the ARS, and much of the vision and ideas in the Plan are the result of that input.

The Plan sets a clear vision and objectives for the National Rhododendron Gardens – to position it as the cool-climate botanic gardens of Melbourne, including formally gazetted it as a botanic garden. The collections within the garden have diversified over the years to showcase more than just the stunning Spring flowering of rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias – the garden offers year-round appeal with its impressive collections of conifers, maples, hellebores, magnolias and hydrangeas – and the planned new additions mentioned above will further strengthen the garden's year-round appeal and reinforce its significance as a cool-climate botanic garden.

As it stands, the garden already operates largely within accepted international definitions and criteria for botanic gardens – as defined by the IUCN's *Botanic Gardens Conservation Strategy 1989* – currently meeting 9 out of the 10 criteria in whole or part. Formally recognising it as a botanic garden would deliver a range of benefits including:

- Improve the profile of the garden, and consequently improve year-round visitation;

- Increase opportunities for strategic partnerships with other botanic gardens, industry and educational institutions; and
- Improve Parks Victoria’s ability to attract horticultural expertise to support botanic management practices.

The primary role and strength of the National Rhododendron Gardens as a botanic garden is in *ex situ* conservation of cool-climate plant species (“living collections”). This is the role we already play in global conservation, and it is a role we aim to strengthen and consolidate with the support of our botanic partners. In instances where research capability and/or herbaria are necessary to support conservation efforts, Parks Victoria would partner with other botanic gardens that can support these efforts, such as our friends at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

The removal of entry fees in 2010 has had a profound impact on the garden. We have seen annual visitation increase by 200%, as well as the visitor demographics change to include more families, multicultural groups and local residents. This combined with an increase in requests for volunteer and work experience opportunities indicates the community’s engagement and ‘ownership’ of the garden is increasing. Meanwhile, retail sales have more than doubled over that period, and in line with forecasts in our retail business plan, that continued growth will soon see retail revenue exceed historic ticket revenue.

The National Rhododendron Gardens are at an exciting point in their history, and it is the intention of Parks Victoria to raise the bar and take the next step as a botanic garden. But make no mistake – there’s a lot of hard work ahead of us, and nobody is going to magically appear overnight with a suitcase full of money, either from government or the private sector. The steps we need to take must be driven by our own initiative and ingenuity.

The ARS has the potential – and in fact are the best placed – to play a major role in the gardens’ conservation activities through the development of propagation programs for threatened species. The expertise that resides within the ARS is an invaluable resource that is perfectly placed to lead in the propagation of threatened species for addition into the living collections. I have had very early discussions with members of the ARS executive on this concept, and I am eager to develop a model that sees the ARS partner with Parks Victoria in this regard. The ARS will require more active members to enable the model to become a reality, and I hope the prospect of being part of such an exciting and important program will encourage more members to get involved.

In conclusion, I believe the ongoing development of the garden will be about small wins: drawing on our botanic expertise and networks to improve our collections and our profile; exploring commercial opportunities to grow revenue and develop improved visitor experiences; and leveraging the community’s increasing love of the garden to encourage more active volunteering.

The foundations are there in the dedicated Parks Victoria staff and active ARS members who want to see the garden thrive. The more people prepared to join the cause, the greater our chance of success.

## THE STOCKWELLIA'S, A SIDE TRIP DURING THE NORTH QUEENSLAND VIREYA SURVEY 2012

Before moving to Melbourne in 2004, our home was on a 107 acre rainforest block at Boonjie in North Queensland. We enjoyed the luxury of southeast views to the Barnard Islands off Mission Beach, and western views of our rainforest canopy. There are no temperate seasons, as such, yet seasonal changes definitely occurred as new leaf shoots and flowering created a continually changing palette of cream, pinks and reds patch worked into the numerous hues of green. I am still enthralled by the biodiversity and verdant nature of rainforest and particularly when you can experience forest giants like *Agathis* and *Stockwellia*.

We were just a few kilometers away from this population of giant trees that were only discovered in 1970's by Vic Stockwell, a forest ranger with the Queensland Forest Service. We would walk into these magnificent trees each year and marvel at their grandeur and the display of bright pink new growth. So I was keen to share these trees with members of the NQ vireya survey group, Andrew Rouse, John O'Hara, Ian Chalk and Dan MacLeod.

The discovery came about from trialing aerial photography as a way to target trees for forestry potential. Keith Gould spotted some unidentified emergent tree crowns, and then he and Vic ground truthed the trees, which later proved to be a new discovery. [Photos page 14] *Stockwellia quadrifida*, a member of the Myrtaceae, is endemic to just two small areas on the south-eastern edge of the Atherton Tableland and the Bellenden Ker Range. They grow in rainforest at an elevation of around 600-750 m and are considered to be “present-day descendants of, and very similar to, the ancient Gondwanan fossil species, which is considered the ancestor of all *Eucalyptus* species diversified from it into so many different *Eucalyptus* forms today.<sup>1</sup> The trunks of the trees are immense with the bark layer quite thin, with a pink blush. The blaze odour resembling that of Camphor Laurel (*Cinnamomum camphora*) or pine (*Pinus* spp.).<sup>2</sup> They have some features of both *Eucalyptopsis* and *Allosyncarpia* and the specific epithet *quadrifida* is given in reference to the way the flower opens.<sup>3</sup> The stamens are attached all over the inside surface of each of the four tepals. The flowers are arranged in triads, and the resulting pod, about 15-20mm, produces a large seed nothing like fine eucalypt seed but more the size of a coffee bean.

We were very fortunate to see intact seedpods and numerous seedlings, as on all my previous visits I never found anything but partially decayed pods. This was definitely a worthwhile trek to replace the cancellation of cable car access to get to the peak of Bellenden Ker.

Prue Crome

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wet\\_Tropics\\_of\\_Queensland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wet_Tropics_of_Queensland)

<sup>2</sup> [http://keys.trin.org.au:8080/key-server/data/0e0f0504-0103-430d-8004-060d07080d04/media/Html/taxon/Stockwellia\\_quadrifida.htm](http://keys.trin.org.au:8080/key-server/data/0e0f0504-0103-430d-8004-060d07080d04/media/Html/taxon/Stockwellia_quadrifida.htm)

<sup>3</sup> R.Elick and P. Wilson The discovery of *Stockwellia* (Myrtaceae) Australian Systematic Botany Society Newsletter 113 (December 2002) p 15-16

## JOTTINGS

### **A little something!**

1. I have a *little* Sat nav

It sits there in my car

A Sat nav is a driver's friend

It tells you where you are

2. I have a *little* Sat nav

I've had it all my life

It does more than the normal one

My Sat nav is my wife

3. It gives me full instructions

On exactly how to drive

"It's sixty k's an hour" it says

"And you're doing sixty five"

4. It lists the vehicles just in front

It lists those to the rear

And taking this into account

It specifies my gear

5. I'm sure no other driver

Has so helpful a device

For when we leave and lock the car

It still gives me advice

6. It fills me up with counselling

Each journey's pretty fraught

So why don't I exchange it

And get a quieter sort?

7. Ah well, you see, it cleans the house

Makes sure I eat alright

It washes all my shirts and things

And – keeps me warm at night

AUTHOR: Unknown or not owning up!

### **AND ANOTHER:**

A woman is about to have a baby and is taken to the hospital by her husband. He is told that it will be some time yet and to give a call in a couple of hours. Later he anxiously rings the hospital but gets one digit wrong.

After identifying himself he asks 'How is it going?'

Answer 'Not bad, we've got one out and there's another. We should get the rest out soon'.

'Who is that speaking?' says the startled father to be.

'I am the captain of the cricket club' comes the reply!



*R rex*

Photo Alan Keperat at NRG, September 2012



*R lochiaie* Bells Peak North,

9th September 2012

Photograph Prue Crome



*R lochiaie* Bells Peak North,

9<sup>th</sup> September 2012

Photograph Prue Crome



*R lochiaie* Bells Peak North

with Ian Chalk behind flowers

9th September 2012

Photograph Prue Crome



Power suppy at Malanda Caravan Park

Photograph Marcia Begg



NQ Expedition members at Malanda

Simon Begg, Dan Macleod, Prue Crome, Andrew Rouse, John O'Hara, Rob Hatcher, Jacki Hatcher, front Ian Chalk, photographer Marcia Begg



***R viriosum*, Mt. Lewis  
3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012  
Photograph Marcia Begg**



**Welcome? To Mt Lewis  
World Heritage**



***Dendrobium speciosum* Mt Lewis  
3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012  
Photograph Marcia Begg**



**Mary Gandini  
Mt Lewis, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012  
Photograph Simon Begg**



***Stockwellia quadrifida* both above and  
left, 7th September 2012**



**Expedition starting ascent of Mt. Bartle Frere, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2012**



**Overnight Mt. Bartle Frere  
4<sup>th</sup> September 2012  
Photograph Prue Crome**



***R lochiae* Mt. Bartle Frere  
5<sup>th</sup> September 2012**



**Summit Mt. Bartle Frere  
5<sup>th</sup> September 2012  
Ian Chalk and John O'Hara**



**Cairns Bush Walkers about to guide  
Expedition up Bells Peak North  
9<sup>th</sup> September 2012**



**Descending Bells Peak North to  
*R lochiae* on South East side,  
Dendrobium in foreground**



**Boulder field on descent Mt Bartle Frere  
5<sup>th</sup> September 2012**



**Arrival at Josephine Falls after  
descending Mt Bartle Frere  
5<sup>th</sup> September 2012**



**Charlie Roberts  
About to guide expedition up Mt.  
Finnigan 11 September 2012**



***R viriosum*  
Mt Finnigan  
11 September 2012**



***R viriosum*  
Mt Finnigan  
11 September 2012**



**Expedition in boulders near summit  
Mt. Finnigan  
11 September 2012**



## **ARS' NORTH QUEENSLAND VIREYA EXPEDITION SEPTEMBER 2012**

### **Simon Begg, Rob Hatcher, Prue Crome and John O'Hara**

ARS Vireya expedition members assembled in Malanda Falls Caravan Park from Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> August to Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September. They comprised Robert Hatcher, President, (South Australia) and Jacki Hatcher, John O'Hara, President Victorian Branch, Prue Crome, Andrew Rouse, Dan MacLeod and Simon and Marcia Begg (Victoria) and Ian Chalk (Emu Valley). There was drama just getting there as Rob and Jacki rolled their vehicle near Moomba in North East South Australia and Santos operations and had to be airvaced to Broken Hill and then flown to Adelaide. They assessed their bruises and decided to continue, this time flying to Cairns.

The plan was to explore Mt Bartle Frere, Mt Bellenden Ker and Bell's Peak for *R lochiaie* and Mt Lewis, Mt Finnegan and Windsor Tableland for *R viriosum* in the following two weeks and to return in 2013 to explore as many as possible of the remaining North Queensland peaks known to have Vireya populations as could be achieved in a two week period.

The plan commenced at National Council in October 2011. But its genesis was Simon's visit to the Vireya Species Glasshouse at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in May 2008. Dr George Argent showed Marcia and Simon, as well as a number of other ARS members, the treasured collection, undoubtedly the world's best. Included were the two Australian species. Dr Argent stated that there were differences between different plants of *R viriosum*, for example in their seeds. They noted that, unlike almost every other Vireya species in the collection, these Australian plants had no definitive provenance. They lacked basic information as to the source mountain, GPS co-ordinates and altitude as well as growing conditions. Marcia and Simon went next to Amsterdam to visit their daughter and family. There Simon wrote the May/June 2008 *Newsletter* and researched material for the article he included in it, *Australia's Native Rhododendrons: Their Provenance*. He has reproduced that article because, to understand ARS' 2012 expedition it is necessary to have, readily at hand, what is known from previous collections of Australian Rhododendrons. In doing his research he came, quite by accident, across Mary Gandini's 2002 paper, *An investigation of Rhododendron lochiaie F. Muell. Its taxonomy, distribution and genetic variance*. Mary's paper is very short and Simon has quoted almost all of it in his 2008 article. In her paper Mary detailed her ascent of the North Queensland Rhododendron Peaks collecting specimens for her DNA study of the Australian species. Her conclusion was that there was only one species but that more work needed to be done to express a definitive view. Australia does not have surplus of taxonomists. Lyn Craven CSIRO, Canberra [and a longstanding ARS member] is, for rhododendrons, on his own, and now retired, though still working. Back in 2008 he maintained the view that he and Dr Withers expressed in 1996 that there were 2 Australian species. But in October 2010 where Lyn Craven and Dr Sue Gardiner [Principal Scientist, Plant Gene Mapping, The Horticulture and Food Research Institute of New Zealand Limited] were both speakers at ARS' Golden Jubilee Conference at Olinda they

discussed a further study into the Australian rhododendrons and involved Mary Gandini and, through her, the Australian Tropical Herbarium. This further, yet to be completed, study gave added impetus to the expedition. Simon asked Mary for help in the planning and execution of ARS' 2012 expedition which she willingly gave. Mary's herbarium specimens from 2002 remain but none of her cuttings survived in Cairns. Ironically they would have survived in Olinda or other cooler southern locations or even the Atherton Tableland.

Execution of the plan required permits to collect cuttings. The permits however were not granted and so the collection of live material could not take place. Despite this the expedition went ahead with the intention of assessing *Rhododendron* populations and gaining an understanding of their locations and habitats in preparation for when the appropriate permits are granted. Visitation proved to be a problem at Mt Bellenden-Ker due to the Telecommunications Cable Car being out of commission for non-telecommunications personnel until mid 2013 due to cyclone damage. Visitation to Windsor tableland was not granted despite personal representations from a permit holder.

### **Mt Lewis**

The full expedition set out early on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September to drive to the end of the Mt Lewis Road. Four volunteers accompanied us from the Queensland Tropical Herbarium, Mary Gandini, Garry Sankowsky, his wife Nada and Rod Patterson. Garry must be one of the leading world experts on Queensland wet tropic plants. Nada and Rod Patterson were, *inter alia* fern experts and Mary was no slouch with plants beyond our vireyas. We gained, in a day, an education that might otherwise take weeks of intense study. And we found plants of the Mt Lewis form of *R viriosum* at 1236m, according to Prue Crome's altimeter. Without our guides we would never have found the *Vireya* colony. They were about 100m off the road about 200m from its present end on a rocky outface facing the prevailing SE winds. This site was found about 30 years ago by a Mr Bruce Gray, who still visits it on occasion. The site is near, rather than on, Mt Lewis. The road originally went on to Mt Sturgeon during forestry operations. There are, our guides told us, 3 *R viriosum* sites on or near Mt Lewis, all similar.

Expedition members differed as to the conservation status of this colony. Rob Hatcher thought not endangered. While that is true, present conditions continuing, Simon observed that this colony, said to be 200m x 50m was perched precariously on granite rocks on the edge of a south east facing escarpment. These plants were having a hard time of it, compared with *R viriosum* in cultivation. Very small annual growth, only the current year's leaves retained and very straggly plants. Many, if not most, leaves had suffered insect attack. There were many new seedlings on the edge of the rocks but few growing younger plants. Obviously few new seedlings survive their early years. Many older plants had grown horizontally rather than vertically. All plants were terrestrial or lithophytic [growing on rocks]. A drought could permit fire. Could the whole escarpment slide into the valley below? More generally can a species, or two if there be two, be *of least concern* if they are found only in isolated colonies on or near the tops on tropical mountains near or above 1000m? There is much yet to learn of the migration of these plants to Australia.

We were assured by our hosts that nearby colonies at Mt Sturgeon and Windsor Tableland were much healthier with many plants epiphytic. These are not the other Mt Lewis sites referred to above.

The *R. viriosum* was found to be growing in an exposed area, but some overhead cover was provided by *Leptospermum wooroonoran*, a tea-tree of very limited distribution. The Rhododendrons grew in areas of thick moss and in association with *Paphia* (Agapetes) *meiniana*, its *ericaceae* cousin, with its pretty tubular flowers and *Dendrobium agrostophyllum*. Orchids were common on the rocks and in the trees, with *Dendrobium jonesii* and *Dendrobium speciosum* in full bloom. *Cymbidium madidum* was also found growing as a terrestrial amongst the Rhododendrons. Plants also found growing in the immediate area included *Alxyia oreophila* and a species of *Zieria* with its pungent leaves.

We were fortunate that Garry, in particular, had enough time and patience to show us some of the special Mt Lewis plants both at the top of the mountain and as we drove back down towards Mt Molloy.

Ferns were prolific, with the road bordered for much of the way by *Cyathea rebecca*, its fairly simple fronds contrasted in some of the brighter spots by the lacy fronds and ridiculously slender trunk of *Cyathea robertsiana*. At one point, just off the road, *Cyathea bailyana*, with its odd hairy upper trunk, was making it clear where it gets its common name of wig fern.

Family *Proteaceae* were well represented and included *Carnarvonia*, with its bright red new growth and *Placospermum* with its huge juvenile leaves being found near where we parked at the end of the road. Shade for the cars was provided by a big *Sphalium racemosum*. The *Proteaceae* highlight was Garry taking us to a patch of *Stenocarpus davallioides* where the huge mature trees were interesting, but it was the small seedling looking just like the ferns they are named after that caught our attention.

Other plant highlights for the day were *Prumnopitys (Podocarpus) ladei* as large trees and the impressive size of the *Oraniopsis appendiculata* palms.

Mt Lewis proved to be the only site Marcia and Simon visited though, at the time, Simon had hoped to climb Mt Finnegan. Mt Finnegan is the most northerly *Vireya* colony and, from Mary Gandini's paper, as well as earlier views of Dr Withers and Lyn Craven the likely original source, in Australia, of *Vireya*. Unless the rumour, that there are *Vireyas* in the Iron Range North of Cooktown, proves true. As the highest point in that range is only 500m that seems unlikely.

## **SWB and JO'H**

### **Ascent of Mt Bartle Frere and observations of *Rhododendron lochiaie***

On Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> September six members of the ARS group searching for the Australian Rhododendron species started to ascend Mt Bartle Frere from the Atherton side. The group included from Victoria, John O Hara, Prue Crome and Dan Macleod; from Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden, Tasmania, Ian Chalk and from South Australia Robert and Jacki Hatcher.

Kicking off from around the 700m above sea level we climbed to around 1450m and camped for the night. This took us from around 8.00am to around 3.30pm. Markers of the trail were often hard to locate and the going was reasonably challenging at times.

There was misty rain overnight and a fair amount of wind. Most members woke after a reasonable rest and, after breakfast, resumed the climb to the summit.

Vegetation altered at around the 1500m mark away from tropical montane forest to more heathland and coral fern. Many genera from within the *Epacridaceae* (now included within *Ericaceae*) were encountered alongside the path.

At around 1550m we encountered *Rhododendron lochiaie* in flower with a beautiful truss. The plants we saw at this location were growing in similar conditions to *Rhododendron viriosum* at Mt Lewis, on top of granitic boulders and among a lot of sphagnum.

Moving straight on to the summit, as we had made the decision to go over the top and down to Josephine falls the night before, we reached this at around 10.30am.

After getting the photo opportunity over we started down the other side. This is where you might say the fun started. The boulder fields on the Josephine falls side of Bartle Frere are apparently not easy in good conditions. When we encountered them the rain, which up until then had been fairly light, started to increase in intensity combined with what could be called a stiff breeze. There were Rhododendrons at this location, again at around 1550 to 1600m. To say this part of the climb was tough is understating it. The next hour was spent traversing these boulders in very tough weather conditions. I hope members of the ARS that may read this will forgive the glossing over Rhododendron observations as survival became more paramount.

Once we had crossed the boulder fields, with some assistance from the personnel of the Australian armed forces, we encountered a sign, which read:

*"If you have come up from Josephine Falls and get to this point and it is raining turn around and go back down. It is too dangerous to proceed."*

Needless to say, while I laughed out loud when I read it, my laughter was more from an ironic position than a humorous one.

The rest of the trek was all down hill for 7kms and with many steep and awkward spots to get through. Sheer hard slog accompanied by the occasional leach of course.

At the 3km to go mark, we the stragglers, Jacki and myself and Dan who had stayed with us all the way to give us support, met with Andrew Rouse who gave Jacki a well earned rest from her pack.

Arrival at the Josephine Falls car park was at around 6 pm.

As a consequence of the harsh conditions observations of *Rhododendron lochiaie* on Bartle Frère were somewhat cursory by comparison to Mt Lewis and, later on, Bells Peak and Mt Finnegan. However some conclusions can be drawn.

The population/s on Bartle Frere grow in much the same conditions to Mt Lewis, though, perhaps, slightly more exposed to the elements. They do perch precariously on boulders and, to the eye of a gardener, do look somewhat bedraggled and moth eaten. They are in a location that receives high rainfall and rarely would dry out even in the dry season. Threat to

their survival would have to be if this regular moisture disappeared. Collection of material from Bartle Frere would have to be rated as hard and field pressing would not be recommended because of carrying equipment. Unless there is evidence of imminent extinction my personal view is that the population at Bartle Frère can remain as a known entity and only be collected if absolutely necessary. [*There is the important issue of genetic differences, if any, between the disjunct R lochiaie and R viriosum populations and between those of the same species and the associated question of the source, development and history of the Rhododendron populations in Australia. This was the point of Mary Gandini's 2002 paper and the further study now being undertaken at Queensland Tropical Herbarium in consultation with Lyn Craven [Australian National Herbarium Canberra] and Dr Sue Gardiner [Principal Scientist, Plant Gene Mapping, The Horticulture and Food Research Institute of New Zealand Limited]. For this Lyn Craven believes further specimens are needed. Simon Begg Ed.*]

Having been up Mt Bartle Frère my opinion of what is needed to go looking on Bellenden Ker, even with access by cable car, has altered; the conditions are tough and better knowledge of where the plants are located is needed before going up. [*What Rob obviously did not know at the time of his climb and at the time he wrote his note is that I had discussed the site of Rhododendrons on Mt Bellenden Ker with Mary Gandini who had been there. She gave me a map and volunteered to find us a guide. She also warned us of the need for gloves to protect from sword grass. This, of course, was before we discovered that cable car access was not possible. I thought I had passed the information on to all expedition members. Obviously not. Simon Begg Ed.*]

What I take away from this is there are definitely two species and they are healthy wild populations presently. What climate change will do is anyone's guess but my guess is the plants will still be there in 50 years time.

The account of Bells Peak and Mt Finnegan will fall to others as Jacki and I had to return to Adelaide for family reasons.

## **RH**

### **Bell Peak North**

Bell Peak North is south of Cairns, on the Malbon Thompson Range and north east of the Bellenden Ker range. The peak is on Yarrabah Aboriginal Land, which abuts the Coral Sea and the only access is from the western side through private property and state forest.

The climb, which included ARS members Ian Chalk, Dan MacLeod and Prue Crome, was achieved with the assistance of the Cairns Bushwalkers who arranged access and then led and marked the route and took place on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September.

The party of 20 set out from sea level in fine, warm, humid conditions and had a steady climb through dense coastal rainforest. It took approximately 4 hours to reach the summit at 1026m where the wind whistled through the communication tower. The view along the coast, from which the bush walkers gain their reward, was non-existent due to the low cloud, wind and rain that had started closing in as we neared the top and persisted for a few hours, only clearing when we were back at the bottom.

The first *rhododendron lochiaie* appeared over the lip of the peak, facing south-east, sheltered in forest yet on top of a rock exposed to light and moisture. **(Picture Page 13)**. This first large flower was nothing compared to the population that was accessed by a sheer vertical descent through forest onto large boulders at approximately 998m facing the prevailing winds to the south east. The sight of *rhododendron lochiaie* in full flower, with their bright red blooms shining through the gusting clouds, negated the pain of my frozen hands and cold wet body. The plants were magnificent both in form and flowering. They ranged in size up to approximately 1.5 meters high and one meter wide, some dense and well formed and others straggly, depending on exposure and their position. Leaves were generally large and entire and were maintained on the stem unlike those on Mt Lewis and the plants were very healthy with little insect damage. The more exposed plants displayed sun colouration and wind damage. The botanical characteristics were generally as described by Dr G. Argent, "Rhododendrons of subgenus vireya" p324, with the leaves broadly elliptic etc. but the inflorescence was 6-12 flowered, not the 2-6 as in Argent's description. There were many buds still to come so the peak flowering period might extend for some time. It would be very difficult to ascertain whether this was a usual or a freak flowering event without further investigation. **(Pictures Page 13)**

The vireyas were lithophytic and terrestrial with roots within a tangle of vegetation and moss covered humic matter that had collected on and in rock crevices. The composition of the vegetative layer that protected the vireya roots were ferns, vines and stunted trees and shrubs. *Paphia* (*Agapetes*) *meiniana* was present but not as dominant as on Lewis and Bartle Frere. More specific to Bell Peak North were *Syzygium leuhmannii*, *Plectranthus* sp., *Cissus* sp., a fern like *Nephrolepis* sp., and some unidentified shrubs, as well as *Zieria* sp., *Timonius singularis*, *Leucopogon* sp.. *Dendrobium speciosum* were in full flower on the larger exposed boulders.

Given we were accompanied by the Cairns Bushwalkers our schedule necessarily needed to work in with them, so time exploring the vireya population was limited. It was very hard to evaluate the size of the population due to the compromised viewing conditions and very steep terrain. The descent was made easy due to the lingering excitement of abundant flowering and it was definitely the highlight, for me, of the vireya survey on this expedition.

## **PC**

### **Mt Finnigan**

By the second week of our expedition work commitments and ill health, both at home and within our party had taken their toll. So by the time we headed off towards Cooktown and the ascent of Mt Finnigan we were reduced to four members, Ian Chalk, Prue Crome, Dan Macleod and John O'Hara. We based ourselves at Helenvale, 30km SW of Cooktown, staying at the self-described "iconic" Lions Den Hotel (three of us in a safari tent and Ian in no less than a Donga).

Prior to heading to Queensland we had organized for Charlie Roberts, a holder of land at the base of Mt Finnigan to act as guide. We met him at his property at Shiptons Flat early on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September. After a brief introduction it was off on foot through his grazing

property and up the northwest ridge of the mountain. The ridge was a steady climb through mostly open woodland, being eucalypt woodland (some plants being *Euc. Pellita* and *Neolitsea dealbata* (grey Bollywood)) at the base with pockets of rainforest species, including Australian Red Cedar (*toona ciliata*), Kauri Pine (*Agathus robusta*), Brown Pine (*Podocarpus grayae*) and Northern Silky Oak (*Cardwellia sublimis*).

Half way up to the top, Charlie Roberts left us to our own devices, saying, “you can’t get lost from here”. This was true for the climb up, but we got lost twice on the way down.

At about the half way point there were parts of the forest reminiscent of a Mornington Peninsular foreshore, with the upper story dominated by Banksia and Casurina, only here the Banksia was *aquilonia* and the Casurina *intratropica*.

The western peak (Mt Finnigan has about 4 peaks) was reached after about 3.5 hours of walking. The weather at the top was, as for most of the other mountains climbed, challenging, strong winds, thick wet mist, surprisingly cool for the latitude and not pleasant for humans. The rainforest stopped at the top of the mountain, the winds obviously limited everything to the height of the rocks forming the razorback ridge.

We found *Rhododendron viriosum* amongst the rocks, either in crevices between rocks or growing from cracks in rocks where enough humus might collect and occasionally away from the very top of the mountain, at the base of the rocks. This very pretty oversized rock garden in which the Rhododendrons were growing also contained *Paphia meiniana*, *Zieria sp*, *Timonius singularis*, *Leucopogon sp*, and surprisingly *Tecomanthe* vines (in Flower). Every surface, either rock or the nearby tree branches was festooned with orchids many in flower.

We lunched at this peak of the mountain after which we went along the razorback for a short way, but the cold was getting into our bones and so we decided to head back down.

The *Rhododendron viriosum* we found during this part of the expedition differed significantly from what we had seen on Mt Lewis. The Rhododendrons found here appeared very healthy, well clothed in thick smallish leaves and were short well branched tight bushes about 300mm tall and perhaps half as much again across. This short stature was understandable for bushes in areas of high exposure to the wind, with this leading to wind pruning, but the bushes remained short even in sheltered positions. Some plants on the edge of rocks grew with their branches hanging down, forming neat pendulous bushes. There was no sign of flowers, either as flower buds, spent flowers or seed capsules. The Rhododendrons were common where present but their distribution was limited to the highly exposed areas or in the immediate vicinity.

### **Some Conclusions**

Rhododendrons were easily found on the tops of all the mountains we climbed. They were fairly common if given the right conditions, but the right conditions were of very limited extent and confined to the exposed tops of mountains. We only saw them growing on or immediately adjacent to large granite boulders.

There was considerable variation between the appearances of plants from different locations. The Mt Lewis *viriosums* and Bartle Frere *lochiales* were generally very scraggy plants, tall

and sparsely branched, their flower trusses had only a few flowers per truss (based on only a few sightings). Mt Finnigan plants were stout, good shaped bushes, but we did not see any flowers. Bells Peak provided the highlight of the trip, its plants were healthy, well formed and carried numerous trusses with more flowers per truss than what we have seen in cultivation.

### **Further Work**

If no permit is ever issued to us then there is still much which can be achieved. The Bells Peak exercise shows that poorly explored regions can give exciting results. Places like Thornton Peak and Devils Thumb are well explored and we will probably find little new there. There are however places like Bells Peak South and Mt Tozer in the Iron Range, well north of Cooktown, both of which are reported by reliable sources to have Rhododendron populations. The species and nature of the plants in these locations is not known.

If a permit to collect is issued to us then there is a lot more work that needs to be done. Garden trials of plants collected from different locations would lead to an understanding of their differing growth and flowering habits. DNA studies to resolve the issue of the history of the Australian species and whether there is more than one species.

### **Closing**

This trip brought ARS members from three states together. It provided an opportunity for those members involved to get to know other ARS members and have a very enjoyable (if not very strenuous) time. It significantly improved the knowledge of our Australian Rhododendrons, not only within the expedition party but also more widely throughout the ARS. If this study can be continued on into the future then it could provide an avenue by which young fit members could be attracted and to take part in more such expeditions.

**JOH**

## **GENERAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 2012**

Around twenty members came to hear the Victoria members of ARS' Vireya hunting expedition to North Queensland recount their experiences. They were Prue Crome and Dan Macleod [four mountain explorers], John O'Hara [three mountain explorer], Andrew Rouse [one and a bit mountain explorer] and Simon and Marcia Begg [one mountain explorers]. John's knee needed a rest for Bells Peak, Andrews back played up on Mt Bartle Frere and Simon and Marcia were vehicle access only climbers and there was only one mountain, which the expedition had permission to access, that was accessible by vehicle- Mt. Lewis. The explorers also included Rob and Jacki Hatcher, South Australia and Ian Chalk, Emu Valley. Their combined narrative appears at pages 17-24. Mt Bartle Frere proved to be a real challenge and the four mountain explorers really earned their mythical ribbons for their achievement.

Prue Crome had put together a slide show of photographs from the expedition including the four mountains and other activities in North Queensland. One that deserves special mention is a visit to Garry and Nada Sankowsky's property near Atherton. Garry is one of Australia's foremost experts on Australia's tropical plants and he has some 2000+ species growing. Another was the trip to see the Stockwellias near where Prue and Francis Crome lived until



2004. Yet another was a visit to see *Acacia purpureapetala* at Irvinebank *Acacia purpureapetala* at Irvinebank *Acacia purpureapetala* at Irvinebank as described by John O'Hara in his President's Report.

There was a noncompetitive Bench mostly contributed by Simon Begg and Andrew Rouse. Many good blooms were there to see but, clearly the evening's interest lay in the explorers' narratives and Prue's slide show.

One item of interest, seeing that there will not be a Cup Weekend Show this year, is the Ferny Creek Show on 27-28<sup>th</sup> October. Relevant bits of the entry form are enclosed for Victorian members.

## **AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE RHODODENDRONS: THEIR PROVENANCE** *Reproduced from Newsletter May- June 2008*

Today, it is accepted that Australia has two native rhododendrons, *R lochiaie* and *R viriosum*. The original discovery of the first Australian Rhododendron by Messrs Sayer and Davidson on, or at least near, Mount Bellenden-Ker is reported in the *Victorian Naturalist* 4 (1888) 37. The story of that discovery was retold by Dr Bob Withers in 1992 when he presented the fifth Baron von Mueller Memorial Lecture on the subject "*Rhododendron lochiaie*, Australian's only known native rhododendron species, its discovery, cultivation and hybridisation". That lecture appears in the *Rhododendron* 32 (1992).

According to Dr Bob, the specimen Sayers collected is in the National Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne under the number 135. It was described and named by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller *Rhododendron lochae*, after Lady Loch, wife of the then Governor in recognition of her patronage of Victorian horticulture and of rhododendrons in particular. Baron von Mueller's description appears in the *Victorian Naturalist* for March 1887. Von Mueller served as Victoria's first Government Botanist from 1853 until his death in 1896. In addition, he was director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne from 1856 until 1873. Famously, von Mueller is credited with speculating, when he saw the rugged outline of Mount Bellenden-Ker inland from Cairns in North Queensland (when he was on A C Gregory's north Australian exploring expedition in search of the missing explorer, Leichhardt), whether species of rhododendron would be found thereon. And so they were!

Dr Bob provided a brief synopsis of the life of von Mueller and the history of the memorial lectures. Bob includes Sayer's account of the discovery of *Rhododendron lochae* and von Mueller's original description of it. Bob details the name change of the species to *R lochiaie* in the *Rhododendron Handbook* 1980 (RHS) to conform to correct botanical Latin in the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature.

Bob then provides a modern description of *R lochiaie* as belonging to sub-section *Euvireya*. In addition to the specimen at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne Bob notes that herbarium specimens of *R lochiaie* collected by Messrs Sayer and Davidson are in the herbarium in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew recorded as being from Mount Bellenden-Ker at 1530 metres. A herbarium specimen of *R lochiaie* collected by Christie Parmison on Mount Bartle Frere in 1888, and one collected by Stephen Johnson on Mount Bartle Frere in November 1891, are in the National Herbarium in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. Kajewski collected *R lochiaie* on Mount Bartle Frere in 1929 under the number 1278 at 1450 metres. Dr Leonard Brass collected it on Fulton Peak in 1932 under the number 2284 at 1080-1380 metres. Specimens from these collections are in the herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It was collected by Dr Brass in 1948 on Mount Finnigan and was

also collected on Mount Spurgeon on both occasions as herbarium specimens. Donald Teese found *R lochiaie* on Mount Finnigan in May 1978. His description is in *The Rhododendron* 18 (1978). Donald Teese and his brother Peter now run Yamina Rare Plants Nursery in Monbulk. Their father, Arnold Teese, was the first ARS President and delivered the first Baron von Mueller lecture on Friday, 12 July 1968.

A differentiation of the Australian rhododendrons into two species is reported by Craven L A and Withers R M (1996) "A second species of *Rhododendron* (Ericaceae) from Australia *Edin.J.Bot.*, 53, 23-37.

A description of the identification of the second Australian native rhododendron and of the nomenclature difficulties in naming it appears in a paper "Old is New and New is Old: *Rhododendrons Lochiae and Notiale*", *The Rhododendron* 36 (1996). This paper makes the case for re-naming the original Australian rhododendron discovery as *R notiale* and conserving the name *R lochiaie* for the plants from the mountains to the north and west of Cairns on the ground that these plants were the ones in cultivation and used in hybridising under that name.

In *The Rhododendron* 43 (2003), Lyn Craven describes the rejection of the name proposals of *R lochiaie* and *R notiale* by the committees responsible for the nomenclature of flowering plants. Consequently, the original discovery (with curved corollas) reverted to *R lochiaie* and the more commonly available plants with straight corollas were re-named *R viriosum*.

Older society members no doubt remember Bob Withers' 1992 address but that was before my time in the Society. So I thought it be worthwhile recording a summary of the history. The real point of this paper however arises from my visit to The Vireya Research Facility at Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh in May this year. I noticed, there, plants of *R lochiaie* and *R viriosum* that, unlike most vireyas in the research facility, appeared not to be enjoying the conditions. George Argent, in his book, described *R lochiaie* as reaching 6.5m but not being as vigorous as *R viriosum*. Not true of my plants. George pointed to two different seed forms on *R viriosum*. Then he asked me "do Australians know the provenance of their plants?" I was forced to concede that, though I knew where I got my plants from, I had no idea of their real provenance nor how it might be established. It does seem to me that our Society needs to trace its plants [and its members' plants] back to the described collections by our collectors. In addition, as it is still possible to import plant material into the U.K., it would be desirable to update the RBGE collection with properly provenanced samples.

There is yet another twist to the tale. In trying to identify the relevant literature, I came across an article by Mary Gandini in the Australian Systemic Botany Society Newsletter 111 (June 2002) headed "An investigation of *Rhododendron lochiaie* F. Muell. Its taxonomy, distribution and genetic variance".

Mary Gandini is from the School of Tropical Medicine, Cairns Campus, Townsville University [By 2012 James Cook University. Mary is now a volunteer with Australian Tropical Herbarium]

As she says at the commencement of her report "the Eichler Fund Award provides financial assistance for [her] investigation. The money was used to purchase chemicals for molecular analysis and for field trip expenses. It allowed [her] to extend the study to investigate many more mountains than previously proposed". Mary concludes her note by stating that she has completed her studies in rhododendron for the moment and is presently seeking a new systematics project, preferably one closer to ground level since she is somewhat tired of scaling mountains minus a helicopter. She reports:-

“*Rhododendron lochiaie* grows in disjunct populations of the high mountains in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area of North Eastern Queensland. These mountain sites are boulder fields and pose problems of accessibility exacerbated by frequent wet and cloudy weather. Craven and Withers (1996) separated *R. lochiaie* into two species on morphological differences correlated with geographic position. Thus populations on mountains to the north of Cairns were named *R. lochiaie* [now renamed *viriosum* Ed] and populations to the south were named *R. notiale* [now renamed *R lochiaie* Ed].

The morphology was reassessed and cladistic analysis of the results produced two monophyletic clades that were in accordance with the delimitation of Craven and Withers (1996). The sample was of limited size and may not have included all the diversity existing within the species.

Since *R. lochiaie* [now *R viriosum* Ed] was not recorded from many other high mountains in the Wet Tropics, a survey of the mountains was conducted. Although similar conditions and taxa associated with *R. lochiaie* [ now *R viriosum* Ed] were found on other mountains, the species was not found.

Molecular variation was investigated using RAPDs. Cladistic analysis of RAPD data did not concur with the morphological results. The southern populations formed a well supported clade within the northern populations. The Mt Finnigan population was basal to all other populations. Analysis of molecular variance showed that there was significant variation between the northern and southern populations and greater variance between Mt Finnigan and all other groups. However, the greatest variance was between all the populations when they were treated individually. The concept of two species was not supported by this preliminary investigation, but more work is required for a definitive answer. And a good pair of legs!!”

Lyn Craven states that his view of there being two Australian rhododendron species is not shaken by her work. However there does seem scope for further fieldwork. Perhaps this is a project that Australian Vireya enthusiasts might think worthwhile.

**SWB**

### **THE 2012 PROGRAMME**

NB The Rhododendron Newsletter will be produced quarterly this year. Issues will be sent out by email or post in January, April, July & October. Contributions would be greatly appreciated.

Committee meetings will be held at 5.00pm before General Meetings & as necessary.

**OCTOBER** - Newsletter

**SUNDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> – 2.00pm** National Rhododendron Garden Workshop cancelled.

**FRIDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> – SUNDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> NATIONAL COUNCIL AGM AND GARDEN VISITS AT EMU VALLEY RHODODENDRON GARDEN, BURNIE TASMANIA. ALL WELCOME.**

**NOVEMBER**

**SATURDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> -TUESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> - RHODODENDRON SHOW** cancelled

**SUNDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> – 2.00pm.** Garden visit to the home of Clare Rouse, Andrew Rouse’s mother who has very kindly invited us to visit her garden at 8 Stonehaven Court, Toorak.

**FRIDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> 8.00pm** AGM and General Meeting at Nunawading. Speaker to be advised.

## **DECEMBER**

**SUNDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> from 12.00PM** – Christmas lunch at the National Rhododendron Gardens.  
**BYO everything**, BBQ supplied. Enter by rear entrance and park near lunch room or Park's office.

**JANUARY 2013** - Newsletter

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## **OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2011-2012**

<b><u>PRESIDENT</u></b>	John O'Hara	9523 7017	johnohara@optusnet.com.au
<b><u>VICE-PRESIDENTS</u></b>	Graham Price	9639 4493	lithic01@bigpond.net.au
	Mike Hammer	97552176	mihammer@bigpond.com
<b><u>TREASURER</u></b>	Vacant		
<b><u>SECRETARY</u></b>	Mick Hare	9844 2232	burrow@netspace.net.au
<b><u>COMMITTEE</u></b>	Marcia Begg	9751 1610	mnbegg@gmail.com
	Simon Begg	9751 1610	<a href="mailto:simonbegg@gmail.com">simonbegg@gmail.com</a>
	Prue Crome	9489 8094	prue.crome@fcpl.net.au
	Francis Crome	9489 8094	francis.crome@fcpl.net.au
	Inge Hammer	9755 2176	mihammer@bigpond.com
	Val Marshall	9803 4434	valerie_marshall@bigpond.com
	Alan Walker	9726 8836	
	Elizabeth Xipell	9859 9934	lizax@melbpc.org.au
	Vacant (1 position)		
<b><u>NATIONAL COUNCIL DELEGATES</u></b>	Marcia Begg and Prue Crome		