

An unsubstantiated record by J.D. Hooker was listed in the "Handbook of the New Zealand Flora" (Hooker, 1864: 325). Edgar and Shand (1978) listed *Andropogon refractus* R.Br. noting that "One specimen, without locality, was mentioned by Hooker as probably accidentally placed in Allan Cunningham's herbarium. No specimens seen".

It is possible that barbed wire grass was accidentally brought to New Zealand in the early phase of European farming via seed or livestock imported from Australia. Given the abundance of another Australian grass, *Bothriochloa macra* on

Motutapu Island and the early Auckland record of kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) in the 1870s and 1880s by T. F Cheeseman, and its more recent discovery on Browns Island in 2007 (Wilcox 2008), this may suggest that barbed wire grass has been present for some time and has gone undetected.

Acknowledgements

I thank Rhys Gardner for identification and providing me with useful background information, Ewen Cameron for helpful comments, and the editors for improving the text.

References

- Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research, 2010, Australian Tropical Rainforest Plants Edition 6 [online version] <http://www.anbg.gov.au/cpbr/cd-keys/rfk/index.html> (accessed 17 April 2017).
- Edgar, E.; Shand, J.E. 1978: Checklist of Panicoid grasses naturalised in New Zealand; with a key to native and naturalised genera and species. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 25(3): 343–353.
- Gardner, R.O. 2007: Grasses (Gramineae) of the Central Pacific Ocean Region. *Rec. Auckland Mus.* 44: 43–83.
- Hooker, J.D. 1864: *Handbook of the New Zealand Flora: a systematic description of the native plants of New Zealand and the Chatham, Kermadec's, Lord Auckland's, Campbell's and Macquarie's Islands.* Part I. Reeve, London.
- Orchard, A.E. (ed.) 1994. *Flora of Australia* Vol. 49, Oceanic islands 1. AGPS, Canberra.
- Parham, H.B.R. 1940: Fiji plants: their names and uses. *The Journal of Polynesia Society* Vol 49, No.16: 17–32.
- Simon, B.K. & Alfonso, Y. 2011. AusGrass2, <http://ausgrass2.myspecies.info/> (accessed on 17 April 2017).
- Whistler, W.A., 2015: Annotated list of Tahitian plant names. *Allertonia* 14: 1–121.
- Wilcox, M.D. 2008: Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) on Browns Island, Hauraki Gulf. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 63(1): 25.

The walking stick cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* var. *palmifolia*) on Motukorea/Browns Island, inner Hauraki Gulf, Auckland

Ewen K. Cameron



Fig. 1. A slightly limp walking stick cabbage specimen at the herbarium – a challenge to press! Photo: Dhahara Ranatunga, 22 Mar 2017.

I received an email from Holly Cox, Auckland Council: "We collected a *Brassica* sp. on Browns yesterday. It is rather large. Wondered if it was ok to drop off this afternoon or tomorrow?" The 1.7 m tall specimen was rather larger than I expected (Fig. 1). A Google search quickly revealed that it had many common names, including: walking stick cabbage, walking stick kale, palm cabbage, palm kale, Jersey cabbage, Jersey kale, long jacks, cow cabbage, tree cabbage and Cesarean cole. The scientific name in wide use was *Brassica oleracea* var. *longata*, however, I could not find a valid publication for this varietal name. Checking with IPNI staff confirmed that it is just a horticultural name and that its correct name is: *Brassica oleracea* var. *palmifolia* DC., Syst. Nat. [Candolle] 2: 584, 1821. This is yet another useful variation of this amazing species, *Brassica oleracea*, which includes: Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, head cabbage, savoy cabbage, kale, kohlrabi and collard greens.

Because of the site where it was growing, the collectors of the specimen on Motukorea said it appeared to be wild, not planted (Fig. 2). How did it get there? The tiny seeds are virtually spherical,



Fig. 2. Jonah Kitto-Verhoef with walking stick cabbage (1.7 m tall) just before it was harvested, on Motukorea. Photo: Holly Cox, 20 Mar 2017.

c.2 mm across and not winged. Perhaps stuck to a bird's foot, the side of a beak, or even passed through whole? There has been a significant increase in rock pigeons on the island in recent years and the cabbage was close to a cliff overhang where these birds may have roosted (Steve Benham pers. comm.). As a new casual it would qualify as an addition to the naturalised and casual records of the New Zealand flora, which was last updated by Heenan et al. (2008). If more plants appear I'm sure we'll soon hear about it. The herbarium specimen of leaves and stem cross-sections fails to show the magnificence of the living specimen (Fig. 3).

Seeds of walking stick cabbages are available in New Zealand (e.g. Egmont Seed Company 2017). As a one-off, about 10 years ago, these cabbages were cultivated in the temperate glasshouse at the Wintergardens in the Auckland Domain.

There are three letters on "cow cabbage" to the *The Farmer's Magazine* (July 1836: 57) with a wonderful illustration, all published on one page (Fig. 4), on various attributes of the plant.

References

- Egmont Seed Company 2017: <http://www.egmontseeds.co.nz/vegetables> (accessed 7 Apr 2017).
 Heenan, P.B.; de Lange, P.J.; Cameron, E.K.; Parris, B.S. 2008: Checklist of dicotyledons, gymnosperms, and pteridophytes naturalised or casual in New Zealand: additional records: 2004-2006. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 45: 257-283.
 Wikipedia 2017: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerseycabbage> (accessed 7 Apr 2017).



Fig. 3. Herbarium specimen details: Auckland Region, Motukorea/Browns Island, Crater Bay; *S P Benham, J Kitto-Verhoef*; 20 Mar 2017; single plant 1.7 m tall, on raised sediment at base of exposed sedimentary cliffs; mid stem 63 mm diameter; largest leaves to 44 cm long. One of two sheets (AK 364441 A).

For a time in the Channel Islands the stalks were also made into walking sticks, of which 30,000 a year were being sold by the early 20th century, many for export. After two years of drying the stalks were varnished, sanded and a handle created either by heat-treating and bending the root end or by planting at an angle to produce a naturally bent root (Wikipedia 2017). Do any of our members have one of these walking sticks?

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to: Steve Benham and Jonah Kitto-Verhoef for collecting the specimen and Steve for his comments; Holly Cox for taking the *in situ* image and delivering the plant to the Museum; Joshua Salter for her comments on the draft text; Dhahara Ranatunga for the herbarium image; Paula Legel and Zoe Richardson for assistance in locating *The Farmer's Magazine* reference; and Rafaël Govaerts and Kanchi Gandhi at IPNI for the correct name and publication of the walking stick cabbage.

COW CABBAGE.

I received a packet of the seed of this extraordinary cabbage, from a gentleman of Cirencester, who brought it from Jersey, and had sown it. In his garden, I have seen five healthy plants, which

weathered last winter, in the open garden, remarkably well, and seem to be equally hardy with their congeners. I subjoin a sketch and description of this curious esculent, as supplied me in a communication from this friend.



"The above is somewhat the appearance of a plot of a variety of cow cabbage that I saw growing in Jersey. It is much cultivated there, and attains the height of from 4 ft. to 10 ft. or 12 ft. The little farmers feed their cows with the leaves, plucking them from the stem as they grow, and leaving a bunch or head at the top. The stems are very strong, and used for roofing small out-buildings; and after this purpose is answered, and they are become dry, they are used for fuel. When the gathering of the leaves is finished at the end of the year, the terminating bud or head is boiled, and said to be particularly sweet."—*John Murray.*

ON THE CULTURE OF THE COW CABBAGE, OR CESAREAN COLE.

BY MR. BERNARD SAUNDERS, NURSERYMAN, ISLAND OF JERSEY.

SIR,—Observing an article on cow cabbage, or Cesarean cole, communicated by Mr. J. Murray, permit me, through the medium of your miscellany to offer a few remarks on the subject. Having resided in this island about twenty years, I have had an opportunity of appreciating the great advantage this variety of *Brássica* is to the small farmer as well as to the large one, and will, with your permission, give your readers a brief account of its culture and uses. The seed is sown, from about the 20th of August to the 1st of September, in a good soil, and planted out, from November to January and February, in succession, at from 20 to 30 in. distance, in a good, substantial, well manured soil; as no plant is more exhausting or requires a better soil,

but, perhaps, no one plant produces so large a quantity of nutriment during its period of vegetation. About the month of April they begin (from the first crop) to strip the under leaves, cut them in small pieces, mix them with sour milk, bran, and other farinaceous substances, and give them as food to ducks, geese, hogs, &c. During the whole summer they continue stripping the plant as above stated, until it attains the height of from 6 to 12 ft.; and, if a scarcity of herbage prevails, the green leaves form excellent feed for cows and oxen, with alternate feeds of hay and straw. The tops and side shoots are excellent at table during winter and spring.

The longest of the stalks are frequently used to support scarlet runners and other French beans, and as cross rafters for farm buildings under thatch, and have been known to last more than half a century, when kept dry, for the latter purpose.

I am, Sir, &c.

BERNARD SAUNDERS.

Nursery, Island of Jersey, April 14, 1829.

COW CABBAGE, OR CESAREAN COLE.—Noblemen, Gentlemen, and others who take an interest in agricultural pursuits, have now an opportunity of comparing and judging for themselves, by visiting the Bedford Conservatory, Covent Garden, where specimens of the above most excellent variety of *Brássica* have just been received from an eminent nurseryman in the Island of Jersey, and which it is presumed are similar in every respect to those now exhibiting at a perfumer's in Cheapside, and other shops in the metropolis, and for which, as we understand, a packet containing only a few seeds, a most exorbitant price is demanded.

Fig. 4. Facsimile of three letters about "cow cabbage" and an illustration. *The Farmer's Magazine*, July 1836: 57.