

PITFALLS IN COMMON NAMESJ. Beever

Ever wondered how they use the roots of briar roses to make the well known briar pipes? Well, according to the dictionaries, Shorter Oxford and Chambers 20th. Century, they don't. These authorities say that briar pipes are made from the white heath (Erica arborea), grown in Algeria and known by the French common name, bruyère (= heath). The anglicisation of bruyère to the pronunciation briar, led to the erroneous identification of this product with the briar rose. It is an old and widespread error.

And now that you are on your guard, what is the botanical name of Scotch thistle? Well it appears to depend on where you live. In New Zealand it is Cirsium vulgare as many will know but in British reference books you will find that Cirsium vulgare is called spear thistle. So what plant do the Brits call a Scotch thistle?

It is the Onopordum acanthium, a similar thistle which grows in fields, waste places and roadsides in England, especially in Norfolk, but is rare in Scotland! In fact Chambers Dictionary says, "national emblem of Scotland (not native)". We in New Zealand call it cotton thistle and the 50 year old Hilgendorf "Weeds of New Zealand" recorded it as of uncommon occurrence appearing only in the West Wellington area and then as "uncommon".

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THE DISTRIBUTION OF MELICYTUS MACROPHYLLUS AND A NOTE ON M. RAMIFLORUSR.O. Gardner

M. macrophyllus is familiar to Aucklanders as an understory tree in forest and regenerating Leptospermum stands of the Waitakere Ranges and the North Shore. Surprisingly, though, its range southwards virtually finishes here at Auckland, and surprising too the species is absent from the Coromandel Peninsula and the northern offshore islands (except Great Barrier, where John Bartlett found a single tree in forest near Port Fitzroy). There are only two outlying southern localities, Matakana in the Bay of Plenty (Kirk, WELT) and, remarkably, Wakari Creek at the edge of Dunedin city (Cheeseman 1906, citing specimens of Thomson and Petrie, which I have not seen). At neither place does there appear to be any knowledge of the species subsequent to the original gatherings.

My attention had been drawn to M. macrophyllus by Dr Brent Maxwell who told me that this species is well and truly naturalized in the native shrubbery at Middlemore Hospital, Otahuhu, so providing a first record for the southern side of the Waitemata. Presumably there are or have been, older plantings here (necessarily several, since the species is dioecious) but I have not yet located them, and there remains the interesting possibility that this population has arisen by long-distance dispersal.

In their vigour and continuing successful reproduction the Middlemore plants do not give the impression of being confined by present-day environmental factors and it seems more reasonable to suppose that M. macrophyllus is a species still adjusting its range after Pleistocene restriction on the North Auckland peninsula.