Daniel John Blanchon (1971–)

Daniel (Dan) Blanchon was born on 24 May 1971, in Doncaster, Yorkshire, England, the only child of Bill Blanchon, who was also Yorkshire born, and his wife Jen (short for Jennifer), from Lincolnshire. Dan's grandfather was a coalminer. The French sounding family name has its origins in the 16th to 17th century Huguenot (French Protestant) settlement in England.

In 1973 the family migrated to New Zealand. Dan's interest in plants began as a child growing up at Huapai, north of Auckland. Both his father and grandfather were keen gardeners, and his parents, enthusiastic ramblers in England, took him on tramps in the Coromandel bush, fostering his interest in living things.

Dan Blanchon, John Child Bryophyte Workshop, Ohakune, 2013

Cladia blanchonii

Cladia species are fruticose lichens found on soil, rocks and logs, and usually have perforations in their stems. Dan Blanchon's informal description for those who would like to find *Cladia blanchonii* on Unitec grounds: "It's small, quite tubular, and it looks a little bit like crushed instant noodles. It's called a coral lichen, because it looks a little bit like coral, and it commonly grows on volcanic rocks."

After attending Huapai Primary and Intermediate Schools and Mt Albert Grammar School, he completed a BSc in botany at the University of Auckland (1992). Immediately he went on to an MSc (first-class honours), also in botany (1994), with a thesis on the lichen genus *Ramalina* in New Zealand. His PhD, completed in 1999, was on the higher plants – the native iris *Libertia*. His research led to the publication in 2002 of three new *Libertia* species. The genus, originally identified in 1824, was named after the remarkable Belgian botanist Marie-Anne Libert, and Blanchon continued the tradition by naming our new irises after female botanists.

While gaining his qualifications Dan worked part-time at DSIR, HortResearch and Landcare Research, doing field and lab work associated with viruses in mushrooms, facial eczema fungus, coprosma disease, and with Dr Ross Beever, cabbage tree decline. Since 1999 he has been at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, as lecturer, senior lecturer and from 1 February 2014 associate professor in the Department of Natural Sciences. Concurrently, from 2007, he has curated the Unitec herbarium, which he co-founded in 2001. He has also refereed, authored and collaborated in the writing of numerous papers, reports, book chapters, reviews and other publications, and made conference presentations on a range of botanical, ecological and biosecurity topics.

Several scholarships and other awards, including in 2006 a Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago) Research Fellowship, are an indication of the high esteem in which Dan Blanchon is held. A member of the Auckland Botanical Society from 1992 and editor of its journal for five years (2007–2011), he also contributes to New Zealand, Australasian, British and international scientific societies in his fields of interest. In 2013 he was elected a fellow of the Linnean Society of London. Having the honour of a lichen named after him in 2013 was recognition he didn't expect. When researchers at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago were doing DNA barcoding on the worldwide, variable *Cladia aggregata* group, Blanchon sent them specimens from the volcanic rock outcrops at Unitec and other places. From them, a new Australasian species was identified and renamed *Cladia blanchonii*.