

Dugald Carmichael (1772 – 1827)

Dugald Carmichael, familiarly known as "Dughall Ban" – fair Dugald, and later "An Dotar Ban" -- the fair doctor, was born in 1772 on the Scottish Hebridean island of Lismore. He attended the local school, but preferred gathering and examining flowers in nearby fields to joining the rough and tumble of other boys. He was fond of his violin, and enjoyed sketching and colouring, using materials from nature – resorting to his or his sister's blood when he needed red. From an early age he believed only what he could see evidence of, and his denial of the apparitions, fairies and goblins of Highland folklore caused uneasiness among his elders.

His parents were in comfortable circumstances, and in 1787 sent him to the University of Glasgow, where he became proficient in Greek and Latin. He went on to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh, and after obtaining his diploma as a surgeon, returned to live with his parents at Lismore. The flat and rocky ground had little to stimulate the botanist, and he turned his attention to mineralogy. In 1796 he was appointed assistant surgeon to the Argyleshire Fencibles; there is no record of any scientific pursuits undertaken during the nine years he was stationed in Ireland, but a close and valued friendship was formed with botanist Robert Brown, then surgeon's mate with the Fifeshire Regiment.

Forsaking the lancet for the sword, he joined the 72nd regiment as an ensign, and in 1805 was sent with an expedition to the Cape of Good Hope, taking part in the action that led to its capture in 1806. He

began a detailed diary of military movements and his observations on local life and natural history, which he continued wherever he was posted. In 1807 he accompanied a detachment to Algoa Bay, a remote outpost south of the Cape, and became engrossed in ichthyology, drawing and describing many of the coast's fishes. His account of the 1810 conquest of Mauritius, where he was wounded and taken prisoner, included notes on its history, soil, products, defences and political importance. In November 1816, when the British government sent an expedition from Table Bay to annexe Tristan da Cunha, he was given permission to accompany the party to carry out a scientific survey, and his classical account was published in the *Journal of the Linnean Society* 12 (1818).

Captain Carmichael left Tristan da Cunha on 31 March 1817, spent ten days at the Cape, and sailed for England on 7 May 1817, retiring to a farm at Appin on the Argyleshire coast, where he pursued his interests in the nearby countryside. He became known to William Jackson Hooker, professor of botany at the University of Glasgow, and they, too, became close friends and correspondents. After a period of failing health, Dugald Carmichael died at Appin in September 1827. The *Carmichaelia* genus of New Zealand brooms, named and described by Robert Brown in 1825, and a biographical sketch with extracts from Carmichael's diaries, published posthumously in Hooker's *Botanical Miscellany* (1831, 1833), ensure that this remarkable Scottish army officer and naturalist is not forgotten.



Carmichaelia australis

Carmichaelia, a genus of 24 species of brooms in the legume family, is confined to New Zealand, except for one native to Lord Howe Island. Mature plants are usually leafless, with stipules fusing into scales to replace leaves. *Carmichaelia australis* ('southern'), mākaka or maukoro, is found throughout most of the North and South islands in fertile and well-lit lowland to mid-montane sites. It is a multi-trunked, upright to spreading shrub to small tree up to 5 m tall. The flattened and sometimes grooved phylloclades vary greatly in width from 1.5 to 8 mm. Flowers, white with purple veins and often purple centres, occur in clusters from spring through summer. Seedpods with 1–3 yellow, orange or red seeds, often with black spots, dehisce leaving an outline with the seeds attached.