

James Drummond (1786 – 1863)

James Drummond was born late in 1786, probably on the Fotheringham estate at Inverarity near Forfar in the county of Angus, Scotland. According to custom and the local parish records, he was baptised on 8 January 1787. He was the first-born of four children of Thomas Drummond, head gardener at the estate, and his wife Elizabeth Nicol. Initially, James and his younger brother Thomas would have worked with their father on the estate, but by the age of 21 James was employed at Dickson's plant nursery at Broughton, near Edinburgh. In 1809 he was offered the position of curator of Cork Botanical Garden in southern Ireland.

Established by the Cork Institution, the garden was funded by the British government, partly for the testing and propagation of plants for agriculture. Drummond was there for nearly twenty years and during that time went on botanical forays and discovered new plants. In 1810 he was elected an associate of the Linnean Society. Also in 1810, at Cork, he married Sarah Mackintosh. When funding for the garden was withdrawn in 1828, Drummond, out of work with a wife and six children to support, seized the opportunity to travel with Captain James Stirling to the planned Swan River Colony site on the western coast of Australia.

The family arrived in June 1829 on the *Parmelia*. Drummond was appointed honorary government naturalist, with the promise of a salaried post as superintendent of future government gardens. In the interim, he established a garden in the temporary settlement on Garden Island, and took up a grant of land offered to settlers. The paid position eventuated in July 1831, but when it was abolished in 1834 in favour of a new Government

House on the garden site, Drummond returned to his Helena Valley grant and established a nursery and vineyard there. In 1836 he exchanged it for 2,900 acres in the Toodyay valley, and with his sons established their farm Hawthornden, named after the family home in Scotland.

As his sons took over, Drummond collected seeds and plants to sell to herbaria in England. He usually walked everywhere, his packhorses laden with supplies on the way out, and plants on the return. Initially his collections were sent to London and redirected to other botanists, including Sir William Jackson Hooker of the Kew botanic gardens. Drummond's youngest son Johnston, a promising naturalist, was his most constant companion on the longer expeditions; after he was killed in July 1845 at the Moore River his father lost interest in collecting. His enthusiasm returned the next year, together with an honorarium of £200 from the Queen's Bounty for his services to botanical science. He made two further extensive journeys and sent his last consignment to England in 1852.

In his later years James Drummond held open house at Hawthornden on Saturday evenings, and lectured on natural history. He died at his home on 27 March 1863, survived by his wife, three sons and two daughters. His specimens formed the basis of publications by Lindley and Bentham; he named several Western Australian plants, and 119 were named after him. They include *Phylloglossum drummondii*, a lycophyte (club mosses and their allies) first described by Kunze in 1843. The only species in the genus, it is native to Australia, Tasmania and also New Zealand, where it is restricted to a small area in the Far North.

Phylloglossum drummondii

The only species in the genus, *Phylloglossum drummondii* is a very small plant up to 7 cm high with small tubers and a rosette of up to 10 bright green, fleshy leaves, circular in cross-section, with a sharply pointed tip. It has a single central stem up to 4 cm tall terminating in an erect strobilus consisting of up to 30 sharply pointed bracts covering the sac-like sporangia containing the spores. *Phylloglossum drummondii* has a very short growing season, above ground only from May to October. It may once have been widespread in the North Island, but is now mostly found in recently burnt-over scrubland, usually with sedges, under sparse, low mānuka, on damp gumland sites near Ahipara and Lake Ohia.

PHOTO: Leon Perrie

