

## Delavay's Oak.

- Pere Jean Delavay (1834 – 19895)
- Missionary for Missions Etrangeres de Paris, posted to Hui-Chou, east of Canton in 1867.
- Travelled extensively in China particularly Yunnan Province.
- Persuaded by Pere Armand David to collect for Franchet at the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle when he returned to France in 1881.
- Returned to China in 1882 and alone and on foot traversed around Tapintze, north West Yunnan
- Searched for alpine plant species acceptable to western gardens. He was methodical and meticulous -> 200,000 specimens, 4,000 species of which 1500 were new discoveries.
- Few were successfully cultivated due to small quantities of each species found.
- Species include Deutzia, Aster, Rhododendron, Primula, Osmunda and Incarvillea.
- In 1886 contracted Bubonic Plague -> Hong Kong to convalesce collecting plants on the way returning to France in 1891 to recuperate. \*\*Katherine Park in *The Cambridge Historical Dictionary of disease notes, re Black Death, "Plague is enzootic in rodents in Yunnan"*
- Returned to China in 1893 -> another 1850 plants to the collection, died in 1895 in Yunnan province.

Description of Delavay's Oak from the Journal de Botanique. and Oak ICEA checklist

*Quercus delavayi* French (1899)

Infragenic Classification - subgenus *Cyclobalanopsis*

Description – see Huang Chengiu et al. Vol 4 of Flora of China page 309 as *Cyclobalanopsis*

Illustration of leaves from a plant at Sir Harold Hillier Gardens ( UK) and Clan De Langue Ghent University Botanical Garden.

Recent Monogram references - (Menitsky) Oaks of Asia (2005) page 290.

(Hardy and Lamant) Guide illustre des Chenes 2006 Volume 1  
Page 488

(Translation of entry.) Jennifer McGregor Clark and Latin Class U3A May 2011

Quercus Delavayi New Species.

(*Cyclobanus*) - A tall tree with branches looking as if they are covered with dust and ash; each younger leaf has a brownish-orange colour, the older leaves at the top are hairless, beneath they are thickly tomentose, with a petiole 20 – 25 mm long, dusty with a margin circular from the base either with a small thick unadorned ("coriaceo" ?coriaceous) 8 – 10 cms long, or from the middle from the

third lower part with spikes with longer spikes, hard and sharp pointed, the second sinews on each side 10 – 11; the male thongs (?) are close, in little bunches, short, dusty; the branches are fruit bearing 4-6 cms. long and dusty; the fruit is low (? Dwarf) more than 3-6, the cupule is concave 4-5 mms high, dusty outside, with rings of scales burnt (?) on the edge; the maturing acorn, pressed down in a sphere, scarcely protruding from the cupule 4-5 mm long, rarely longer, oval in shape.

Habitat – Oriental China in the Province of Yunnan in the woods around Tapintze.

#### BALLARAT BOTANICAL GARDENS.

In 1995 (6th October) the Sisters of St John of God Hospital in Ballarat celebrated the centenary of their arrival in Ballarat by planting a tree in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. Sister Assumption, who was present at the dedication, says that the Sisters were told that this was a very rare tree, that only two were in Australia and that they must take good care of it.

The tree is a Delavay's Oak, *Quercus delavayi*, and it is indeed a rare tree. It does not appear in the usual reference books but a description of the tree has been obtained from the journal de Botanique supplied by the staff of the Kew Gardens although they do not have a specimen. The only garden that has so far been found to have one growing is the Sir Harold Hillier Garden in the U.K. and possibly one in Edinburgh. Pictures of the leaves have been obtained from the Hillier Garden and the Ghent University Botanical Garden.

The relevance of the tree in such a celebration for the Sisters would seem to be the association with a Catholic Missionary priest who became such an important Botanist with prolific finds.

David Grant, Senior Archivist of the Ballarat Council remembers sending the tree to the Gardens for the Sisters. It was one of two contained in a consignment of 20 oaks forwarded from the Melbourne Herbarium in 1995. At the time he did not realize the significance of his action, providing a tree named after one of the great Catholic Missionary botanists in China of the 19th century. One thing is certain; this is indeed a rare tree out of its original habitat and deserves recognition.

*Jg 5/11*

*The remaining three Sisters of the St John of God Order that founded the Hospital left Ballarat for Perth in May, 2014. They left behind a great hospital after 119 years of service to the Ballarat community. This tree is another significant reminder of their dedicated work over all that time.*

*Jg 6/14*