

Notice of Motion

Significant Tree Submission – The Poet’s Tree at East Wardell

Significant Tree Register – Ballina Shire Council

Tree type: Lord Howe Island Banyan Tree (*Ficus macrophylla* subsp. *columnaris*)

Location: 1.8 kms south of the Wardell Bridge on Blackwall Road (spreading out over the road from the river side)

Current Dimensions (2021): Stem circumference, 2 m (approximately, at 1 m height, with multiple stems developing); tree height, c. 30 m; canopy spread, c. 25 m.

Collected and Planted by/date: Edwin Wilson, 1968

This Lord Howe Island banyan tree (and its 'sister tree', 'Jim's Tree', also planted in 1968)), are to the best of my knowledge the only known specimens of this type in far northern coastal New South Wales. It is a subspecies (variety) of the more-common east coast Moreton Bay Fig, *Ficus macrophylla*, with a greater propensity to grow aerial roots with the capacity to create additional stems (and become a true banyan tree). As Lord Howe Island is administered as part of New South Wales I assume that this makes this tree an Australian native species.

The location (between the river and the road), is unique. This tree can easily be seen when approaching (from either direction) along Blackwall Road. It is a fine specimen and quite outstanding for its growth (in the last 53 years).

The tree had been threatened with encroachment (of the old Pacific Highway) as it had been progressively widened, and increasing road traffic (and especially buses and trucks) had made it very difficult and dangerous to stop and inspect this tree.

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I had planted this tree in 1968 (originally as a commemorative planting to my great grandparents), in what had been the front garden of the 'Wilson' farm, an historical pioneer site at the location of the original wharf (when the river was the only road), where my Danish great grandfather and his Irish Famine Orphan wife had built a 'log cabin' of split stems of Cabbage palm in the 1860s, with continuous habitation (of the 'Wilson' family, an anglicised name) in this location for more than 100 years. The original pioneer homestead was not demolished until 1941 (not long before I was born in 1942), to build a fibro cottage (without running water, sewerage or electricity), in which I lived for my first five years.

East Wardell was very isolated in the early days before the roads were built. The new road (that ultimately became the Pacific Highway, linking Brisbane with Sydney) went between the old house and the wharf, and in later years it was very dangerous to try to stop to inspect this tree. Blackwall Drive (with the opening of the new highway on the other side of the river in 2020), is far less frequently used, so this tree can now be much more easily accessed.

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11.6 Notice of Motion - Naming of Significant Tree in Wardell

Since 1968 I went on to become a significant Australian poet (as first listed in William Wilde and Joy Hooton's (1996) OUP publication, *Australian Poets and their Works*, with many subsequent articles, books and listings), and the only significant poet to have ever come out of East Wardell.

I know of no other serious poet to have come out of East Wardell (with a total of more than 30 books (poetry, about poetry, poetic memoirs, prose, social history, art books, and many articles), and a number of painting exhibitions since my 2003 retirement from paid work (for more information see edwinwilson.com.au).

East Wardell Banyan Tree (Poet's Tree) references in my poetry include: my first book (of poetry, 1982) was called *Banyan*; *The Botanic Verses* (1993) was dedicated 'For the Banyan Trees at East Wardell'; I have written books on the statues and memorials and memorial trees in the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney (where I worked from 1980 to 2002); my (2018) book *Synthesis* had one of my lino cuts (of this young tree) on its cover, and my last (2020) book, *Family Tree: Old Friends, Rich Relations* incorporated an image of my first book (*Banyan*) on its cover (as a symbolic representation of my greater family tree).

A second (southern) tree had been called Jim's Tree (in 2004), after my long-lost brother Jim (who had found me in 2003). In more recent times more people from the far north coast have increasingly referred to the northern-most tree as the 'Poet's Tree'. It is my hope that this tree will become a place of visitation for family and friends, and a wider circle of people who like my poetry, and as such become an important component of the local community.

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I have now produced a plaque for my tree (image attached). Although I own the adjacent farm I am not quite sure of the status of this land between the road and the river bank, that would have been excised when the road was originally built. I have also attached some photos that include: young banyan tree soon after planting (in 1968), myself at base of tree (in 2004), cover of my book 'Banyan', contemporary photo of Poet's Tree, in context (from Google Earth), and detail of upper branches of this tree (also from Google Earth).

It is my plan to also submit this tree to the National Tree Register of the National Trust of Australia.

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Image 1 – Picture taken of the Lord Howe Island banyan tree in 1968

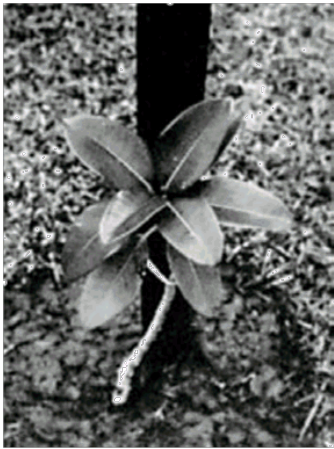


Image 2 – Location and image of Banyan tree

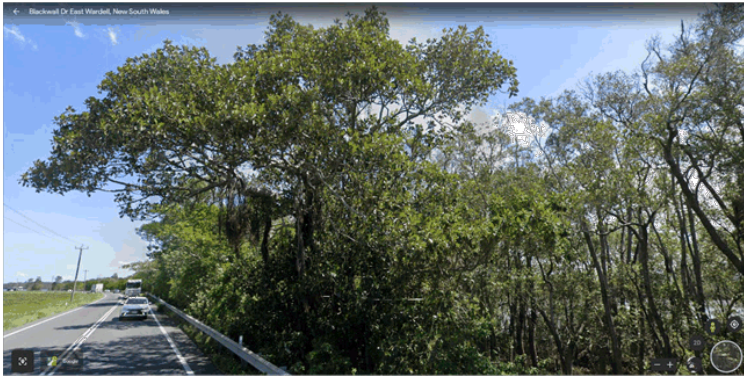
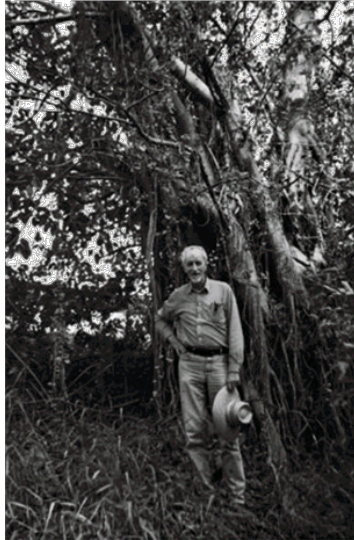


Image 3 – Photograph of Mr Edwin Wilson at the tree in 2004



Ed with Ed's tree February 2004.

Image 4 – Proposed Plaque 'Poet's Tree'.

