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Genoplesium jonesii, a new species of Prasophyllinae (Orchidaceae) from New South Wales

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Abstract

The *Genoplesium sagittiferum* (Rupp) D.L.Jones & M.A.Clem. complex includes several informally described entities, all of which have close morphological affinity with *Genoplesium sagittiferum*. Here we describe *Genoplesium jonesii* sp. nov. for one of these, which has been recognised previously as *Genoplesium* sp. aff. *sagittiferum* 1. *Genoplesium jonesii* differs from other species within the *G. sagittiferum* complex and sect. *Pachychilum* by its combination of long dorsal sepal, which at around 5.5-6.0 mm long is among the longest in the section, and the labellum callus extending to the labellum apex, where it forms a small mucro. *Genoplesium jonesii* is known from two locations in the Central Tablelands, near Wambool and Brayton, and may occur at additional sites between these two. We are pleased to be able to name this species for David L. Jones to acknowledge his significant contributions to our understanding of diversity in Australian orchids, and especially in Prasophyllinae.

Introduction

The Prasophyllinae comprise one of several spectacular radiations among terrestrial orchids on the Australian continent. The Prasophyllinae includes around 250 species, most of which are endemic to Australia (Jones 2024). Many of these species were first recognised less than three decades ago, as a result of collecting efforts and critical studies undertaken at the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research at the Australian National Herbarium and Australian National Botanic Gardens. This research program has had a profound impact on the recognised diversity of Australian Orchidaceae. Jones (1988) recognised 31 species in *Genoplesium sensu lato*, while 63 species are now recognised in the same group (Jones 2024), and this increase has been achieved through the description of new species resolved through dedicated fieldwork by a network of enthusiasts linked to the Australian National Herbarium.

There have been proposals and refinements for revised generic classifications within Prasophyllinae involving more than two genera (Jones et al. 2002; Clements and Jones 2019; Jones 2024). The National Herbarium of New South Wales maintains its longheld position of deferring a decision on adopting a revised generic classification until phylogenomic evidence from low-copy nuclear loci excludes the possibility that longbranch attraction explains the relative isolation of *Genoplesium baueri* in both published and unpublished phylogenies (see Renner *et al.* 2022).

Our current understanding of the fascinating diversity in Prasophyllinae is in large part thanks to the documentary efforts of research completed at the Australian National Botanic Gardens and Orchid Research Group at the Centre for Plant

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Biodiversity Research within CSIRO. To date, 38 new species of Corunastylis and Genoplesium have been described by David Jones and coworkers. New species continue to be discovered and recognised. In its broad (pre 1988) circumscription, Genoplesium (Corunastylis) sagittiferum is one species that has proven to comprise a complex of morphologically similar, yet distinct, species. To date, around 12 segregates from the G. sagittiferum complex have been proposed, including G. stephensonii (D.L.Jones) J.M.H.Shaw, and G. cornutum (D.L.Jones) J.M.H.Shaw. These segregates have not fully resolved the somewhat heterogeneous residual populations, and workers have proposed informal entities to accommodate morphological variants encountered in the field. One of these, G. aff. sagittiferum 1 was proposed by Bower & Medd (2023; under Corunastylis), for plants from the Central Tablelands between Abercrombie Caves and Yetholme. Bower & Medd (2023) noted the species was 'probably more widespread'.



Figure 1. A plant of *Genoplesium jonesii* as observed at Brayton, Central Tablelands of New South Wales, flowering on the 28 February 2025, note the bright yellow-green colour of the lateral sepals in these individuals (photo K. Mauger).

In February 2025 a specimen of an indeterminate *Genoplesium* belonging to the *G. sagittiferum* complex observed at Brayton, Central Tablelands, was sent to the National Herbarium of New South Wales (NSW) for identification (Fig. 1). This specimen originated in the vicinity of Brayton and was not a match for

any accepted *Genoplesium* species, but did match the *G*. aff. *sagittiferum* 1 of Bower & Medd (2023), though the specimen's location represented a significant extension in the known range of this entity. Collection of additional material from the Brayton site, and additional herbarium material from a second locality near Wambool, indicates *G*. aff. *sagittiferum* 1 is a morphologically discrete and diagnosable entity that warrants recognition as a distinct species. In describing this new species we take the opportunity to acknowledge the significant contribution that David L. Jones has made to our understanding of Australian orchid diversity, and especially in Prasophyllinae.

Materials and Methods

Flowering plants included in this study were first collected on 28 February 2025 near Brayton, and again during follow-up fieldwork to gather additional specimens on 13 March 2025. Above-ground parts of some flowering plants were preserved in 70% ethanol, others were pressed and dried. The plants were examined with a dissecting microscope at magnifications up to 50×. The description, including measurements, were made from fresh material and material preserved in ethanol for less than two weeks. Measurements were made with Vernier callipers accurate to 0.02 mm.

Genoplesium jonesii M.A.M.Renner, Orme & C.Bower, sp. nov.

Diagnosis: Genoplesium jonesii is distinctive in its combination of entire dorsal sepal and petal margins, the labellum callus extending to the labellum apex, and the dorsal sepal being up to 6.0 mm long.

Type: New South Wales: Central Tablelands, Brayton [other details withheld], 28 Feb 2025, *K. Mauger & A. Jennings* (holo: NSW 1255150).

Genoplesium sp. Brayton (K.Mauger s.n., NSW1255150), NSW Herbarium, PlantNET [https://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/accessed 27 May 2025]

Corunastylis sp. aff. sagittiferum 1 sensu Bower and Medd (2023)

Terrestrial tuberous herb. Leaf c. 16 cm long, 2.0 mm wide, terete, green with reddish base, lamina sheathing the scape, free lamina 16 mm long, 2.0-3.0 mm wide, ending at the level of the first flower. Inflorescence 32 mm long above leaf, bearing 6–10 flowers in a densely crowded spike 12-18 mm long; flowers opening in sequence from the base; pedicel 1 mm long, ovary 4 mm long on fully opened flowers, weakly curved, dorsal margin in profile falcate, ventral margin in profile straight, flower attachment line flush with ventral ovary margin; ovary ridged, ridges sometimes suffused with purple in the outer half, smooth between ridges. Flowers porrect, yellow-green with magenta markings on dorsal and petals, and yellow-white and purple-black markings on the labellum, 5.45-6.87 mm wide. Dorsal sepal yellow-green with 5 purple stripes, 3 along medial veins and one on each margin, (5.35-)5.80-6.58 mm long, c. 2.0 mm wide in situ, lanceolateovate, tapering from broad base to an attenuate apex, in profile the margin straight, the sepal body deeply concave, margins entire. Lateral sepals green in flower bud, becoming paler with flower opening and age to yellow-green in some individuals 5.74-7.24 mm long, 1.18-1.37 mm wide, lanceolate-falcate, widest just above base but scarcely tapering except for inrolled

margins from around mid-point, concave toward apex, apex with a short non-glandular apiculus. Petals 3.89-4.32 mm long, 1.08-1.33 mm wide, lanceolate and weakly falcate, pale yellowgreen, paler at base, with margins magenta-pigmented at least in the upper two thirds, pigmentation sometimes absent in the basal third, with three incomplete magenta lines on the petal lamina, of variable length and start and end point, with the medial the strongest of the three and extending the furthest toward and usually into the petal apex; mid-vein thickening toward apex and forming a prominent costa that extends beyond the petal apex and a short acuminus; margins sparsely and shortly denticulate to ciliate. Labellum three toned, deep purple at the apex and on margins, bright yellow at the base, and nearly hyaline either side of the callus at middle, 3.32-4.46 mm long, including apex when flattened, 1.90-2.03 mm wide, broadly elliptic to very weakly obovate, widest at or just above the midpoint, with sides tapering therefrom toward the base nearly straight, and toward the apex evenly curved, apex with a short apiculus, often recurved in a line following that of the downward-swept labellum margins; in profile the labellum is falcate in its outer half, and slightly bulbous in its lower half; margins with numerous dark purple cilia, from one quarter the margin length above the base to the apex, toward the base cilia are shorter, and increase in length with increasing distance above the base and around the labellum apex cilia are turgid, non-flexuous, and up to 1 mm long; labellum margin entire at base; callus forms two distinct bulbs at the labellum base that are raised above and below the labellum lamina, these bulbs are bright yellow-green, with papillose surface, and no, or very sparse, purple pigmentation, that presents only medially; between the two bulbs is a shallow depression that deepens and widens toward the labellum base; cells on the adaxial surface of the bulbs are arranged in longitudinal rows, the bulbs themselves are ovoid, and weakly attenuated antically, toward their junction, above which the callus continues as a pronounced half-cylinder raised above the labellum lamina, red-brown pigmented at the base, deepening to dark purple at the apex, sometimes nearly black, in the upper quarter the callus tapers toward the labellum apex, where it extends into the short narrow-triangular apiculus which is comprised either entirely of callus, or primarily of callus with a narrow flanking wing of lamina tissue on either side; cells on the half-cylindrical callus are papillose and arranged in longitudinal rows at the base, and lengthen and become smooth toward the apex, at which point they are long-rectangular and longitudinally orientated in callus middle, and laterally divergent toward the respective margin on either side of the mid-section; lateral-medial labellum lamina above the basal callus-bulbs is nearly unpigmented and hyaline, in this region the smooth cells glisten and sparkle in their reflectance of all incident light. Column 3 mm long, not including column foot, 1.6 mm wide; column foot present, wings unequally bilobed, upper lobe hyaline, triangular with a obtuse apex to oblong with an asymmetrical apex, margins entire, smaller and narrower than lower lobe; lower lobe succulent, hyaline with faint magenta suffusion along outer half below apex, triangular, apex acute, margins ciliolate toward apex, becoming shorter with distance from apex, ciliola apex slightly bulbous, tall dome-shaped papillae mixed in among cilia, and both present on the outer surface of the lobe as well as its margin, inner surface with papillae; anther versatile, 0.7 mm long, broad elliptic, with a filiform rostrum. Pollinarium bright yellow. Figs 2-6.

Etymology: The epithet *jonesii* honours David Lloyd Jones (1944—) to reflect his knowledge and confirmation of the status of this new species, and to acknowledge the substantial contribution he has made to our understanding of the diversity of the Australian orchid flora in its totality. Jones published his first new species in 1972, and for more than 50 years has pursued the discovery and documentation of Australian orchids, including the description of new species, new genera, and the rearrangement and refinement of classifications, including in the Prasophyllinae. Our current knowledge of the diversity within Prasophyllinae owes much to Jones' dedication and persistence, and fondness for *Corunastylis*.

Variation: *Genoplesium jonesii* is relatively consistent in flower size and colour, the shape and length of the labellum callus. The number of flowers produced on an inflorescence varies in correlation with plant stature, and smaller individuals may bear as few as four or five flowers only. The shape and division of the lobes on the column wings is also subject to variation, even among flowers within single inflorescences, with the lower lobe varying from triangular to oblong with an obliquely truncate apex, and the sinus separating the two lobes varying from V- to U-shaped, but always being fairly narrow.

One feature of variation identified during the course of our studies was differences in flower dimensions induced by shrinkage following storage in 70% ethanol. Floral dimensions remeasured after six weeks of storage in 70% ethanol were up to 0.5 mm shorter, for the same flower parts. This was initially concerning, given length of the dorsal sepal is diagnostic of the species, and implies care must be taken when interpreting segment lengths for material stored in ethanol. Unfortunately, the degree of shrinkage induced by storage in ethanol has not been quantified, either through time or in total. This would make a worthwhile and informative investigation, especially in such a complex group as *Genoplesium* sect. *Pachychilum*.

Recognition: The labellum of *Genoplesium jonesii* bears conspicuous cilia on its margin, while the dorsal sepal and petal margins are entire. Based on this combination of characters, the taxon is a member of section *Pachychilum* (Group 2 in Jones 2024). Among the species of Group 2, *G. jonesii* possesses a relatively uncommon feature, which is that the labellum callus extends to the labellum apex, either as a continuation of the raised region or as an extension of elongated cells comprising the apical portion of the callus, but not conspicuously raised above the surrounding labellum cells (Fig. 5). The apiculus at the labellum apex is comprised either primarily, or entirely, of callus. Four other species of sect. *Pachychilum* share with *G. jonesii* a callus that extends into the labellum apex: *Genoplesium ciliatum* (Ewart & B.Rees) D.L.Jones & M.A.Clem., *G. morinum* D.L.Jones, *G. rhyoliticum* D.L.Jones & M.A.Clem. and *G. stephensonii* (Table 1).

The flowers of *Genoplesium jonesii* have a distinctive appearance in profile, because they appear to have a relatively small labellum in proportion to the overall size of the flower. This appearance is imparted by the relatively long dorsal sepal and slightly shorter petals, relative to the lateral sepals, in comparison with other species of sect. *Pachychilum* (Table 1). The dorsal sepal, at 6.1–6.6 mm long (slightly longer in older flowers) is among the longest within the section, and serves to separate *G. jonesii* from *G. ciliatum*, whose dorsal sepal is c. 4 mm long. The

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lateral sepals of G. jonesii are also longer than in G. ciliatum, at (5.74-)6.21-7.24 mm compared with c. 5 mm, though their width is comparable, as are the petal and labellum dimensions. The

labellum callus of *G. ciliatum* does not have the paired prominent bulbs at the labellum base that there extend to the labellum margin, as occurs in *G. jonesii*, and its close relatives, including *G. cornutum* and *G. sagittiferum*.

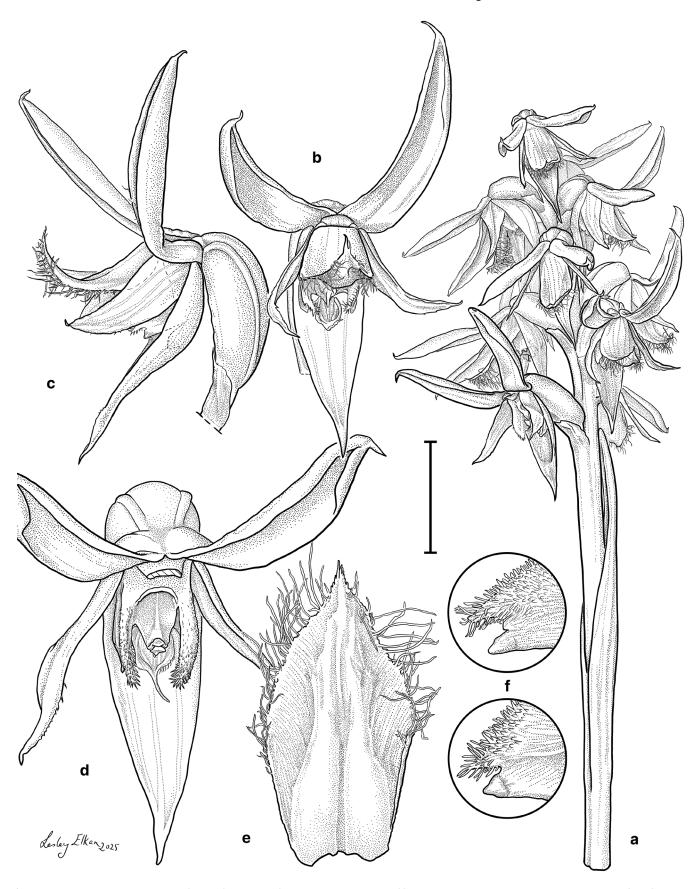


Figure 2. Genoplesium jonesii; a. habit; b. flower - front view; c. flower - side view; d. detail of flower with labellum removed; e. labellum, adaxial surface, flattened; f. column wing lobes - showing variation. Scale bars: a = 6 mm; b & c = 3 mm; d = 2 mm; e = 1.5 mm; f = 1 mm. Illustration by Lesley Elkan, from NSW1255150.

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Figure 3. Two plants (A, B) of *Genoplesium jonesii* as observed at Brayton, Central Tablelands, flowering on 13 March 2025, illustrating the striking colours in combination characteristic of taxa belonging to sect. *Pachychilum*, and the relatively small stature of the labellum within the context of the overall flower (photo A.E. Orme).



Figure 4. Lateral view of lower flowers on inflorescence of *Genoplesium jonesii* (photo A.E. Orme, from NSW 1258952, before preservation).

The dorsal sepal length of *G. jonesii* is similar to that of *G. morinum*, whose dorsal sepal is c. 6 mm long, however the petals of *G. jonesii* are shorter, at 3.89-4.32 mm compared with c. 5.5 mm long in *G. morinum*. The lateral sepals of the two species are \pm the same length, but those of *G. jonesii*, at 1.18-1.31 mm

wide, are narrower than the lateral sepals of *G. morinum*, which are 1.5–1.8 mm wide. The shape of the labellum callus also differs between these two species, with *G. jonesii* having the callus parallel-sided in its antical half and flaring widely on both sides in its basal half into the paired basal bulbs. In contrast, the callus of *G. morinum* tapers ±evenly and continuously from base to apex.

The shape of the labellum callus also serves to differentiate *G. jonesii* from *G. rhyoliticum*, because the callus of *G. rhyoliticum* tapers evenly from base to apex, and does not flare toward the base into paired bulbs. The dorsal sepal of *G. jonesii*, at 6.1–6.6 mm, is longer than that of *G. rhyoliticum*, whose dorsal sepal is c. 4.5 mm long. The lateral sepals of *G. jonesii*, at 6.2–7.2 mm long and 1.2–1.4 mm wide, are longer and slightly wider than those of *G. rhyoliticum*, which are around 5 mm long and 1 mm wide.

The dorsal sepal of *G. jonesii* (5.4–6.6 mm) is also longer than that found in *G. stephensonii*, in which the dorsal sepal is 4.5–5.0 mm long. The lateral sepals are longer in *G. jonesii* (5.7–7.2 mm), than those in *G. stephensonii* (5.0–5.5 mm). The lobes on the column wing also differentiate *G. jonesii* from *G. stephensonii*.

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Table 1. Comparison of characters useful for distinguishing *Genoplesium jonesii* from other species of sect. *Pachychilum* with which it may be confused (based on Jones 2024).

Species	dorsal sepal length (mm)	petal length (mm)	lateral sepal length (mm)	lateral sepal width (mm)	labellum callus	labellum callus shape
G. branwhiteorum	4.0-4.5	3.2-3.7	5.0-5.5	c. 1.4	terminates below apex	bulbous at base
G. carectum	4.0-4.5	3.8-4.2	5.0-5.5	c. 1.2	extending nearly to apex	slightly bulbous at base
G. ciliatum	c. 4	c. 3.7	c. 5	c. 1.2	extending to apex	evenly tapered
G. cornutum	3.0-4.0	c. 3	4.0-6.0	c. 1.5	extending nearly to apex	bulbous at base
G. jonesii	6.1-6.6	3.9-4.3	6.2-7.2	1.2-1.3	extending to apex	bulbous at base
G. morinum	c. 6	c. 5.5	6.5-7.0	1.5-1.8	extending to apex	evenly tapered
G. oliganthum	c. 5.5	c. 5.5	c. 7	c. 1.8	terminates below apex	bulbous at base
G. rhyoliticum	c. 4.5	c. 4	c. 5	c. 1	extending to apex	evenly tapered
G. stephensonii	4.5-5.0	4.3-4.6	5.0-5.5	c. 1.5	extending to apex	bulbous at base



Figure 5. The labellum of *Genoplesium jonesii* illustrating A: the four zones of colour and texture comprising the labellum being the dark medial callus, the basal callus bulbs, the hyaline medial labellum lamina, and the apical and marginal pigmented lamina; B: the callus in oblique view showing the callus tissue projecting dorsally above the lamina and ventrally below the lamina at the base of the callus bulbs; C: the labellum apex, pushed up to show the extension of callus toward and into the labellum apex (photos A.E. Orme, from NSW 1255150, before preservation).



Figure 6. Flowers of *Genoplesium jonesii* in oblique view from below focused on the column wing lobes, showing the narrow sinus, the mostly hyaline colour of the lower lobe and the obtuse apex of the upper lobe (photo A.E. Orme, from NSW 1258952, before preservation).

The following species all differ from *Genoplesium jonesii* in that the callus terminates below the labellum apex. When this feature is variable within a species, or even within individuals, it is useful to compare *G. jonesii* with the following four morphologically similar species that share similar flower colouration and shape with *G. jonesii*.

Genoplesium jonesii differs from G. branwhiteorum M.A.M. Renner & P.H.Weston by its longer dorsal sepal, which is 4.0–4.5 mm long in G. branwhiteorum, by the longer lateral sepals, and the slightly longer petals. The petals of G. branwhiteorum also possess a few small cilia on their margins, though not so many as to be conspicuous, but this is evidently consistent within the species. The labellum callus of G. branwhiteorum terminates well below the labellum apex, and the lower column wings is strongly purple pigmented, whereas in G. jonesii the callus extends to the apex and the lower column wing is suffused with magenta, but is predominantly hyaline.

Genoplesium jonesii differs from G. carectum (D.L.Jones & L.M.Copel.) J.M.H.Shaw by its longer dorsal sepal (4.0–4.5 mm long in G. carectum), and by its longer lateral sepals, (5.0–5.5 mm long in G. carectum). In profile, the flowers of G. carectum are more 'balanced' with regards the labellum stature for these differences.

Genoplesium jonesii has a longer dorsal sepal than that of *G. cornutum* (3.0–4.0 mm long in *G. cornutum*), and the petals of *G. jonesii* are also longer by around 1 mm (c. 3.0 mm long in *G. cornutum*), as are the lateral sepals (4.0–6.0 mm long in *G. cornutum*), though the lateral sepals of *G. jonesii* are narrower (c. 1.5 mm wide in *G. cornutum*).

Genoplesium oliganthum D.L.Jones is also similar to *G. jonesii* but, in addition to the labellum callus terminating below the labellum apex, differs by its shorter dorsal sepal (c. 5.5 mm), longer petals (5.5 mm), longer labellum (5.0 mm), and broader lateral sepals (1.8 mm).

At least one known undescribed entity is also similar to *G. jonesii*. Plants corresponding with Bower and Medd (2023)'s concept of *G.* sp. aff. *sagittiferum* 2 (under *Corunastylis*) occur at the



Figure 7. Habitat of *Genoplesium jonesii* at the type locality, woodland dominated by *Eucalyptus cinerea*, *E. macrorhyncha*, and *E. bridgesiana* (photo K. Mauger).

Brayton site, where they grow together with *G. jonesii*. These differ from *G. jonesii* in their overall smaller flower size, including the column, which is c. 2 mm long in *G.* sp. aff. *sagittiferum* 2, and 3 mm long in *G. jonesii*, and in the lobes on the column wing being separated by a broad sinus, rather than a narrow sinus as in *G. jonesii* (Fig. 6). The upper column wing lobe may also be much longer than the lower in *G.* sp. aff. *sagittiferum* 2.

Distribution and ecology: Genoplesium jonesii occurs in the Goulburn-Mulwaree and Bathurst Local Government Areas of NSW, within the Central Tablelands botanical subdivision. It has been recorded at Brayton, Abercrombie Caves and Yetholme. The species has been observed growing in dry sclerophyll forests, in a mid-dense ground layer dominated by grasses and forbs. Associated species at the type locality include Eucalyptus cinerea, E. macrorhyncha, E. bridgesiana, Cassinia sifton, Acacia paradoxa, A. brownii, Ozothamnus diosmifolius, Dillwynia ramosissima and Brachyloma daphnoides (Fig. 7). The geology at the type locality comprises Devonian granites of the Lachlan Orogen, at an altitude of approximately 620 metres. At Yetholme, the species occurs within Wambool Nature Reserve at an altitude of c. 970 metres. Here, the geology is recorded as Bells Creek Volcanics which are Silurian volcanic remnants preserved as resistant peaks within the granite of the Lachlan Orogen. Wambool Nature Reserve in particular supports an unusually diverse assemblage of terrestrial orchid species.

At the type location, not all flowers go on to produce pods, suggesting *Genoplesium jonesii* may require pollinator visitation to set seed.

Additional specimens examined: New South Wales: Central Tablelands: Wambool Nature Reserve, 8 Apr 1993, A.D. Bishop J265/15-20 (NSW 435001); Brayton, [precise location withheld], 13 Mar 2025, A.E. Orme 2200, P.C. Jobson, K. Mauger, T. Bliss-Henaghan (NSW 1258549); ibid, A.E. Orme 2196, P.C. Jobson, K. Mauger, T. Bliss-Henaghan (NSW 1258952 (sheet) NSW 1256508 (spirit); CANB)

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