

THE HERBARIUM OF JAMES BUCKMAN (1814-1884)

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Introduction

A bound volume of pressed plants labelled 'Liter[ar]y & Philo[sophica] Institution' has been preserved in the herbarium of the World Museum Liverpool (LIV). It consists of 122 sheets, 26 of which no longer have a specimen. With the exception of a specimen of *Juniperus communis*, all are flowering plants. Most of them are annotated "J.B." though a few bear other collectors' names. The plants are generally well localised and dated; all were collected in 1838 from Gloucestershire.

It soon became clear that this collection was made by James Buckman (1814-1884), who at the time the plants were collected was only 23 years old. Despite his relative youth, he was able to identify the plants with confidence and nearly all of them are fully named to species. Buckman went on to become "the first botanist to take up the study of the county flora as a whole" (Riddelsdell et al., 1948: cxxiii).

The album is bound in half leather with marbled boards and measures 305 x 250 x 60 mm. The binding is badly worn. It is titled "Local Flora Part 1, 1838" on the front board. No other parts have been located at LIV. Attached to the front free end paper is an Index to Part 1 dated November 1, 1838 in a blue cover. The pages are numbered from 1 to 128. Most of the specimens are adhered directly to the pages of the bound volume, but a few are mounted on smaller sheets which have been tipped in. These are undated, and were perhaps added later.

Although there is no inscription, the collection is believed to have come to Liverpool from the Museum of Cheltenham Boy's School in 1963 [Eric Greenwood, personal communication] as part of a larger acquisition.

Biography

James Buckman was born in Cheltenham on 20 November, 1814 (or 1816 according to Riddelsdell et al., *loc. cit.*) and was trained as a pharmacist. For a short period from 1842 to 1847 he served as curator of the Birmingham Philosophical Institute (possibly the original place of deposit of the herbarium volume) before being appointed as professor of geology and botany at the

Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester in 1848. While there he wrote an attractively illustrated book on 'The natural history of British meadow and pasture grasses' (1858), and in 1861-62 he co-edited a journal titled *The Practical Farmer's Chronicle and Journal of Agricultural Science*. He resigned his position and moved to Dorset in 1863, where he owned a farm at Bradford Abbas near Yeovil and wrote numerous articles on antiquarian, geological and agricultural topics for the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*. A local directory identifies him as a member of the gentry (Harrod & Co., 1865). He died on 23 November 1884 at the age of 70 years.

Flora of the environs of Cheltenham

Buckman's first botanical publication predates by a year this herbarium collection, and appeared in volume 2 of the *Cheltenham Magazine* in 1837. He went on to publish *A botanical guide to the environs of Cheltenham* in 1844, and these publications provided many of the first published records of plants from Gloucestershire (Riddelsdell et al., 1948). Although some of his records were later queried by the secretary of the Cheltenham Working Naturalists' Association, W.L. Notcutt (1819-1868), who like Buckman had trained as a pharmacist, none of those which were subsequently disregarded by the editors of the *Flora of Gloucestershire* are represented by specimens in the newly discovered herbarium.

Associated collectors

Apart from specimens annotated "J.B.", the following collectors are also represented:

Carey Coles. One specimen from "near Glo'ster". Not mentioned by Desmond (1994).

H. Coles Esq. One unlocalised specimen. Not mentioned by Desmond (1994).

C. Murley. The Revd. Charles Hemsted Murley (1822-1873) became a member of the Botanical Society of London and contributed specimens to H.C. Watson's herbarium. Despite this, and the fact that he lived in Cheltenham, he did not merit an entry in the chapter of the 'History of botany in Gloucestershire' (Riddelsdell et al., *op. cit.*). The herbarium contains four specimens collected by Murley.

J. Walker. The Revd. J. Walker does not merit an entry by Riddelsdell et al. and cannot be identified with any of the J. Walkers in Desmond (1994). The herbarium contains one record from "near Whittington" but the specimen is missing.

The database

The plant records contained in the James Buckman herbarium have been entered into an Access database in the Botany Department at the National Museums Liverpool. With the kind assistance of Mark Kitchen, joint Recorder for Gloucestershire for the Botanical Society of the British Isles, 1 km² national grid references have been assigned to most of the records. The collection has the accession number **1963.171**, with the letter 'B' inserted before the sheet number to differentiate it from the collection of loose herbarium sheets which also bears this number. 22 sheets bear habitat notes in addition to locality information. The dates of collection range from March to October 1838.

The following table lists the main collecting localities, with grid references.

| Locality | Grid Ref. | Locality | Grid Ref. |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Arle | SO9323 | Hartley Bottom | SO9617 |
| Badgworth | SO9019 | Hatherly Court | SO8522 |
| Battledowns | SO9621 | Hewletts | SO9822 |
| Bay's Hill | SO9422 | Hewletts Farm | SO9722 |
| Benwell Wood | SO9221 | Leckhampton | SO9520 |
| Castleton House | SO9520 | Leckhampton Hill | SO9418 |
| Charlton | SO9500 | Marl Hill | SO9423 |
| Cirencester Road | SO9015 | Pittville | SO9523 |
| Cleeve, Cleeve Hill, | | Prestbury | SO9624 |
| Cleeve Road | SO9826 | Prestbury Park | SO9524 |
| Dowdeswell Wood | SO9920 | Shipton | SP0318 |
| Dumbleton | SP0136 | Swindon | SO9324 |
| Glenfall | SO9721 | Uckington Field | SO9124 |
| | | Whittington | SP0121 |

References

Desmond, R., *Dictionary of British and Irish botanists and horticulturists*. Taylor & Francis & The Natural History Museum, London, 1994.

Harrod & Co., Postal and commercial directory: Bradford Abbas, Dorset, 1865.

Riddelsdell, H.J., Hedley, G.W. & Price, W.R. (eds.), *Flora of Gloucestershire: phanerogams, vascular cryptogams, charophyta*. Cotteswold Naturalists' Field Club, 1948.