

THOMAS PALGRAVE (1804-1891)

Mark Lawley
email: m.lawley@virgin.net

This is one in a series of articles about prominent British and Irish field-bryologists of the past. The author would be very pleased to learn of any information which supplements its content.

A Social and Biographical History of British and Irish Field-bryologists is also available on-line at <http://britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk/>

Bryological career

Palgrave began to study mosses while a schoolboy in 1818, doubtless influenced by his relatives, two of whom were Dawson Turner and William Jackson Hooker. He was also bryologically active between 1856 and 1869, during which period he corresponded with William Wilson (1799-1871) of Warrington and knew Frederick Price Marrat (1820-1904), who also lived in Liverpool.

His herbarium and letters are at Merseyside Museum in Liverpool. Further plants are at the Natural History Museum in London, as well as letters in the William Wilson correspondence.

Family background and biography

Thomas Palgrave was born at Great Yarmouth on August 27th 1804, the third son and one of eleven children born to William Palgrave (1771-1838 of Coltishall) and Elizabeth (*née* Barker, 1780-1863). Thomas's siblings included William Parr (1799-1800), Elizabeth Matilda (born 1801), William Barker (1802-1851), Mary Elizabeth (born 1805), Robert (1812-1841), John (1814-1868), Katherine (born 1816), Charles George (1818), Jane Ann (1820), and Eleanor (1821/2).

Thomas's father William was a son of William Palgrave and Elizabeth (*née* Thirkettle), while his mother Elizabeth was a daughter of Samuel Barker of Great Yarmouth and Elizabeth (*née* Norfor) of Stone, Staffordshire. The Barkers had long association with Lowestoft.

Thomas's paternal aunt, Mary Palgrave (1774-1850) married Dawson Turner (1775-1858), and their daughter Maria (1797-1872) married William Jackson Hooker (1785-1865). Thus, Thomas Palgrave was a nephew of Dawson Turner, and cousin to William Jackson Hooker.

When William and Elizabeth first married, they lived in a house in Glasshouse Row, fronting on George Street, and which later became a boarding school for young ladies. In 1807, Samuel Barker bought an old house in Yarmouth, and built in its place a spacious mansion for his daughter and son-in-law.

As a young man, William Palgrave (Thomas's father) served as Lieutenant in a "Yarmouth Gentlemen of Yeomanry" formed as part of a volunteer corps to dissuade the French from invading the East Anglian coast. His experience in that capacity must have prepared him for his subsequent appointment about 1806 as Collector of Customs of Great Yarmouth, an office that he discharged with marked ability. He was also elected mayor of Yarmouth in 1814. In 1826, he was promoted to the Collectorship of Customs in Dublin, which was regarded as a plum appointment, and one that he held until his death in 1838.

Thomas trained for the law, and served articles in Yarmouth with Thomas Fowler Steward. Not long after his father went to Dublin, Thomas moved to Liverpool to practise as a solicitor and notary, specializing in municipal law. After William Palgrave died in 1838, Thomas's mother went to live with him in Liverpool. In 1841 Thomas lived in Grove Street; in 1851 at 100 Lodge Lane, Toxteth Park; and in 1861 at Park Lodge, Princes Park, Toxteth. In 1853, he had offices at 3, Lord Street.

Thomas did not marry, and by 1878 he had retired from practice to Bryn-y-gynog, Llansantffraid, in the Conway valley, Denbighshire. There he served as a magistrate, died on January 30th 1891, and was interred.