

WILLIAM BELLERBY (1852-1936)

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/>

[portrait in *North-west Nat.* 1936, pp. 166-69]

Bryological career

William Bellerby's collection of mosses and his drawings are at the Natural History Museum in London. The National Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cardiff has 149 of his bryological gatherings, collected between 1904 and 1933.

Bellerby also studied fungi, and was a member of the British Mycological Society.

Family background and biography

William Bellerby was born in Leeds, Yorkshire on April 11th, 1852, the eldest child and only son of John Bellerby (1821/2-1912), joiner and builder, and his wife Mary (*née* Richardson, 1820/1-<1901). John Bellerby was born in 1821/2 at Clifton, near York, a son of William (1792-1871) and Margaret (*née* Dobson, 1789-<1871). William Bellerby the grandfather was born in Wigginton, Yorkshire, and was a joiner, like his son John. By the time of the 1871 Census Return, William was a self-employed master builder employing 60 men and 12 boys. John Bellerby described himself as a gutter percher dealer in 1851, a joiner and builder in 1861, and later as a builder and timber merchant.

William was educated at St. Peter's School in York. He hoped to study medicine, but on leaving school was articled as a pupil to Mr Fowler Jones, architect, and lived with his parents in York at the time of the 1871 Census. However, William never practised as an architect, for on completing his training he joined the family firm of builders. He remained with the family firm for 60 years, during which time he completed many important contracts, including the York Military Hospital, Purey Cust Nursing Home (later a Nuffield Hospital), Clifton Methodist Chapel, and the Out-patients Department of the Yorkshire County Hospital. The Bellerbys' family firm became a limited company in 1920, whereupon William was appointed Life Governing Director.

In 1881 he was still living with his parents, married younger sister Margaret Frances Woodhouse and her two young children at 7, Burton Lane, Clifton, near York. However, two months later he married Mary Elizabeth Myers (1853-1925), daughter of the

Reverend John Myers of Cleckheaton. They had two children, William John (born 1883) and Alice Maud (born 1885).

William was deemed insufficiently robust to play games at school and he took up natural history instead. Later in life, he also developed a keen interest in photography, but gave that up when his long-standing interest in natural history took precedence in the early years of the 20th century. He was also an accomplished water-colour artist, and painted life-like fungi and mosses, as seen through the microscope. An ardent Methodist, he subsumed his youthful desire to become a doctor in his considerable interest in homeopathy.

Bellerby joined the Moss Exchange Club in ... His bryological herbarium and drawings are at the Natural History Museum in London.