

WILLIAM GARDINER (1808-1852)

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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

Gardiner discovered *Barbilophozia lycopodioides* new to Britain in Glen Doll, Angus in 1843, and *Buxbaumia aphylla*. He compiled *Flora of Forfarshire* (1848), and *Twenty Lessons on British Mosses* (1846), with a second series with specimens in 1849. This was one of the earliest attempts to popularise field-bryology.

His plants are at the Natural History Museum in London, Kew, and The Lamb Collection at Dundee Central Library includes a foolscap volume of 1,000 pages in neat copperplate writing. The Department of Biological Sciences, Dundee University has about 450 of his specimens collected between 1830 and 1850 and bound into volumes. His letters are at Kew, with further letters, publications, manuscripts and tributes at Dundee Public Library. The University and Jepson Herbaria at the University of California, Berkeley have several hundred of his Scottish mosses. Hull University has about 170 of his specimens, mostly from Angus, with further specimens in the Bromfield herbarium at Winchester, Hampshire. His lichens are at the Hancock Museum in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Family background and biography

William Gardiner was born at Overgate, Dundee on July 13th, 1808. His father, also William (born in Dundee in 1789) was a weaver, gardener, botanist and poet. William senior's father, James, was also a weaver of Dundee.

William senior had an elder brother, Douglas (born 1786), who was also a botanist, and one wonders whether the Gardiners knew Patrick Macvicar (grandfather of Symers Macvicar), who was a minister at Dundee in the first part of the 19th century, and whether they shared an interest in botany.

William junior was apprenticed to an umbrella-maker at the age of ten, in whose employment he remained for five years. In about 1824, aged 15, he began work for Mr George Robertson, hosier and umbrella-maker, and remained in his employment for twenty years.

Gardiner also pursued interests in writing poetry and in botany, and accompanied his father and uncle on their botanical rambles, as well as attending evening classes in botany. He was also a lifelong friend of William Jackson (1820-1848), tailor and botanist of Dundee. In 1844, despite his new responsibilities as husband and family man, he left his employment with George Robertson, and went self-employed. This enabled him to spend more of his time botanizing, collecting plants for people and institutions that paid him. One such patron was George Stephenson, the famous engineer who invented the first steam-engine, and who paid Gardiner two guineas for each of sixteen volumes of dried plants, with the gift of an extra five guineas to mark his pleasure at receiving the volumes.

In 1843 he married Elizabeth Ross Smith (died May, 1850). Their first child, William was born in December that year, but died a few days later. A second son, James Edward Smith Gardiner was born in 1845. He was orphaned at the age of eight when his father died; in 1871 he was a railway porter at North Leith, Midlothian, and in 1901 was a cab-driver in Glasgow.

William Gardiner died, aged 43, at Dundee on June 21st, 1852.

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