

# THE BRYOPHYTE HERBARIUM OF HENRY WILLIAM LETT IN THE HERBARIUM, NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS, GLASNEVIN.

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**ABSTRACT.** Biographical notes on the Irish botanist, H. W. Lett (1836-1920), are given. His bryophyte herbarium, containing c. 15,000 specimens, is at Glasnevin (DBN). About three quarters of the collection is Irish, the rest being foreign material acquired by exchange. Lists of the Irish, British, European and N. American collectors represented in the collection are given. A chronology of Lett's fieldwork from 1876 to 1915 is given. Isotype material is listed.

## INTRODUCTION

The herbarium of Canon H. W. Lett was acquired by the Irish National Herbarium [Then at the National Museum of Science and Art.] in 1921. It contained about 1,000 specimens of flowering plants and "a large, number" of bryophytes, The flowering plants were given the Reg. No.435 as was a collection of c. 600 Sphagnum specimens named according to the Warnstorffian system by J. A. Wheldon (vide Johnson, 1923, 55-61). This Sphagnum collection, already incorporated in the general herbarium at DBN was revised and annotated by Miss E. M. Lobley in 1968 (Lobley and Fitzgerald, 1970).

The remaining bryophytes were given the Reg. No.439; c. 2,000 specimens were incorporated before 1930 but a further 12,000 specimens remained stored in parcels. Recently the material in parcels was sorted and incorporated.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Henry William Lett (1836.1920) was born at Hillsborough, Co. Down. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and ordained in 1871. He became rector of Derriaghy, Co. Antrim, and served subsequently at Meigh and Ardmore in Co. Armagh. In 1886 he was appointed rector at Aghaderg, Co. Down, where he spent the greater part of his working life. He was Canon of Dromore.

Lett began the study of bryophytes in 1860 but does not seem to have taken an active interest in field studies until he joined the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club in 1878 when he was in his forties.

From 1880 to 1915, each year with the exception of 1896 is represented by many specimens in his bryophyte collection. The Moss Exchange Club (which became the British Bryological Society) was founded in 1896 and in that year Lett contributed 133 specimens to the exchange. In that year too he was elected to membership of the Royal Irish Academy.

During the 1880's he collected mainly in the north-east of Ireland, often with the Rev. C. H. Waddell. Particular attention was paid to the Mourne Mountains. Lett published a report on the mosses, hepatics and lichens of the Mourne District in 1890.

From 1897 to 1900 he paid annual visits to the Dingle Peninsula and Killarney in the south-west of Ireland with David McArdle of Glasnevin. The results of these trips were published in McArdle and Lett (1899) and McArdle (1901).

In 1901 he made extensive collections in Mayo, a county he was to visit ten times before he ceased to be active in 1916. Lett was a member of the committee elected in 1908 to organise the ambitious Biological Survey of Clare Island. He began the survey of the bryophyte flora of the island when he was over seventy. This was published as parts II and 12 of the Survey (Lett, 1912).

Hepatics of the British Islands was published privately by Lett in 1902. In it he attempted to describe all the British and Irish species in non-technical language. The book was much criticised but apparently also much used.

The last of the more extended trips made by Lett was with R. L1. Praeger and R. J. Usher to the Saltee islands off the south-east coast in 1913 when they lived in a ruined house sleeping on straw on the floor in that portion which still retained a roof.

Lett's most important publication is his Census Report on the Mosses of Ireland (Lett, 1915). It is a list of all the species then known from Ireland with a list for each species of the vice-counties from which it had been recorded. Detailed records are given for all but the commonest species.

Lett's botanical interests extended to algae, fungi and lichens and he had a knowledge of the Rubi of the north-east of Ireland. *Rubus lettii* was named by Rogers in his honour.

Obituary notices were written by Praeger (1921) and Britten (1921). They differ as to the date of his birth: Praeger gives it as 1836 and Britten as 1838.

Praeger (1921) says, "Possessed of an energetic and sanguine disposition, he ranged far, but sometimes lacked the caution and patience necessary when dealing with critical plants, thus bringing down on himself the criticism of that prince of caution, S. A. Stewart". Some of his bryophyte identifications have indeed been proved wrong but not a significant number. The sheer volume of his collecting cannot at times have left him much time for critical examination but his contribution remains the most significant one in Irish bryology.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTION**

The bryophyte herbarium contains about 15,000 specimens of which about a quarter are foreign specimens acquired by exchange.

The greater part of the Irish specimens come from Down, Kerry and West Mayo; Clare Island and Achill Island are particularly well represented.

The earliest **Down** specimens are dated 1882 and collecting in Down continued until 1915. The following areas are represented:

Aghade; Aghaderg Glebe; Amy's River, Sl. Donard; Ballygowan Bog; Ballynahinch, bog nr.; Ballyvarley Bog; Black Stairs, Sl. Donard; Bryansford; Cave Mt.; Chimney Rock Mt.; Creevy L.; Cratlieve Mt.; Deer's Meadow; Dromantine; Groomsport; Hen Mt.; Killough; Kinahalla; Lackan Bog; Loughbrickland; Maralin Quarry; Meenan Bog; Moygannon Glen; Pigeon Rock Mt.; Rademan; Reeky Mt. nr. Milltown; Rocky Mt.; Rostrevor and Rostrevor Mt.; Saintfield; Scarva Glen; Scrabo; Shanlieve; Sl. Commedah; Sl. Donard; Sl. Martin; Sl.

Meel More; Slievenamaddy; Slievenabrock; Slievenaosky; Spinkwee R. Glen; Thomas Mt.; Tievedocharagh; Tollymore Park; Tullylish; Warrenpoint; White River Glen.

**County Antrim** specimens are dated 1861, '64, '81, '82, '84, '85, '87, '88, '89, '93, '95, 1902, '13. The following areas are represented:

Ballintoy; Black Mt.; Broughshane; Cavehill; Clough; Colin Glen; Coole Glebe; Carnmoney; Crow Glen; Cushendall; Fairhead; Glenariff; Glenarm Deer Park; Island Magee; Kenbane; Liganea; Murloc (sic); Parkmore; Portmore; Rasharkin Bog; Sallagh Braes; Slemish Mt.; Woodburn Glen.

**County Armagh** specimens are dated 1867, '80, '82, '84, '85, '86, '89, '97, '98, and 1904. The following areas are represented :

ArdmoreGlebe; Bird Island; L. Neagh; Camlough Mt.; Cargin Wood; Carter's Bay, L. Neagh; Closet River; Croaghan Island, L. Neagh; Derryadd; Derryinver; Fathom (Mt.); Goragh Wood; L. Derrytrasna; Montiaghs; Ardmore; Narrow Water Demesne; Roughlan; Scarva; Slieve Gullion; Tanderagee Wood.

### **Chronology of fieldwork omitting Down, Antrim and Armagh:**

**1876:** Ben Lettery, Galway.

**1877:** Twelve Pins, Galway.

**1881:** L. Bray, Wicklow.

**1882:** Carlingford Mt., Louth.

**1883:** Anglesey Mt., Louth.

**1884:** Loughrey Demesne, Tyrone; Mullaghmore Mt., Decry.

**1886:** Errigle (sic), Donegal.

**1887:** Strabane Glen, Tyrone.

**1888:** Portstewart sandhills, Derry.

**1889:** Bidderton, Wilts., England.

**1890:** Geashill, Offaly.

**1892:** Geashill, Offaly.

**1893:** Geashill, Offaly; Croaghan, Achill, Mayo.

**1894:** Youghal, Cork.

**1897:** Connor Hill, Brandon, Torc Waterfall and Killarney, Kerry; Roche Castle, Louth.

**1898:** Dingle Peninsula, Kerry; L. Bray, Wicklow; Ravensdale, Louth.

**1899:** Wren-Hill Quarry, Long Sleddale and Kentmere, Westmoreland, England; Killarney and Dingle Peninsula, Kerry; Carlingford Mt. and Anglesey Mt., Louth.

**1900:** Killarney and Dingle Peninsula, Kerry; Benevenagh and Magilligan, Derry; Carlingford Mt., Louth.

**1901:** Pontoon, Doo Lough Pass, Devil's Mother Mt., L. Conn, Nephin Mt., Malranny, Bengorm, Slievemore on Achill, Mayo; Pontoon, Leenane and Clifden, Galway.

**1902:** Coumshingaun and Bolagh L., Comeragh Mts., Waterford; L. Diheen and L. Muskry, Galtee Mts., S. Tipperary. Slieve League, Donegal.

**1903:** Dromin Wood nr. Pontoon, Slievemore and Croaghan on Achill Island, Mayo; Slieve League, Donegal.

**1904:** Slievemore on Achill, Mayo; Magilligan sand-dunes, Derry.

**1905:** Curraun sands, Achill, Mayo; Rossinvermore, Fermanagh.

**1906:** Eagle Mt., Connor Pass, Cromaglow, Muckcross, Inisfallen, Derrycunihy and Kenmare, Kerry; Snowdon, N. Wales.

**1907:** Geashill, Offaly; Roughlan Park, Tyrone; Croaghmore and Croaghan on Achill,

Mayo.

**1908:** Granard, Longford; Mullingar, Westmeath; Sl. Glagh and L. Shevelin (sic), Cavan; Carlingford, Louth.

**1909:** Achill Island (Curraun, Srahan, Slievemore, Croaghan, L. Knock), Mulranny, and Clare Island. Mayo; Coomanard Loughs, Kerry.

**1910:** Louisburg, Clare Island and Achill Island (Sraheen), Mayo; L. Salt, Donegal; Newbridge Bog, Kildare.

**1911:** Killykeen and Derrywhinney Bog, Cavan; nr. Roscrea, Offaly.

**1912:** Glengarriff, Bantry and Ballylickey, Cork; Clermont Cairn, Louth; Beauparc, Meath.

**1913:** Great Saltee Island, Wexford.

**1914:** Achill Island, Mayo; Magilligan sands, Derry.

**1915:** Achill (Slievemore), Mayo; nr. Monea, Fermanagh.

### **Collectors represented in the herbarium of H W. Lett:**

**Irish.** S A Brenan, Isaac Carroll, Th. Chandlee, R Clayton-Browne, J. H. Davies, J. Glover, W. F. de V. Kane, D. McArdle, D. Moore, R. LI Praeger, C. D. Russell, S. A. Stewart, W. N. Tetley, C. H. Waddell.

**British:** E. Armitage, T. Barker, T. W. N. Beckett, H. Beesley, C. H. Binstead; H. Boswell, A. Brinkman, W. H. Burrell, B. Carrington, J. Cash, E. Cleminshaw, W. I. Cocks, W. Curnow. G. Davies, H. N. Dixon, J. B. Duncan, E. J. Elliot, Rev. J. Ferguson, Rev. S. Gasking, N, P. Hamilton, E. M.. Holmes, G. A. Holt, A. R. Horwood, J. B. A. Hughes, G. E. Hunt, W. Ingham, D. A. Jones. H. H. Knight, C. E. Larter, C. H. T. Lett, E. M. E. Lett, J. H. Lewis, Rev. A. Ley, Rev. D. Lillie, W. R. Linton, J. H. Lewis. S. MacVicar, R. H. Meldrum, W. E. Nicholson, S. J. Owen, W. H. Painter, W. H. Pearson, J. Percival, H. P. Reader, T. Rogers, E. S. Salmon, J. Sills. R. V. Tellam, V. S. Travis, W. E. Waterfall, W. West, A. W. Weyman, J. A. Wheldon, A. Wilson, H. H. Wood, Wm. Young.

**European:** Dr. H. Bernet (Switzerland), Boissier (Switzerland), A. Bottini (Italy), Brotherus (Finland), G. Colomb-Duplan (Alpes du Valais), Douin (France), I. Hagen (Norway), Hjelt (Finland), A. Le Jolis (France), E. Levier (Italy), C. Muller (Germany), Theriot (France).

**N. American:** J. W. Bailey (U.S.A.), E. B. Chamberlain (U.S.A.), H. Dupret (Canada), C. C. Haynes (U.S.A.), A. J. Hill (Canada), John Macoun (Canada), R. W. Summers (U.S.A.), M. L. Stephens (U.S.A.).

### **ISOTYPE MATERIAL IN THE COLLECTION**

*Adelanthus dugortiensis* Douin & Lett (now included in *A. unciformis* (Tayl.) Mitt.).

*Plagiochila atlantica* F. Rose (*P. aimbagiosa* auct.)' (vide Synnott, 1976)

*Plagiothecium bottinii* (Breidler) Venturi & Bottini.

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