

## A 17th CENTURY HORTUS SICCUS MADE IN LEYDEN. THE PROPERTY OF THOMAS MOLYNEUX, AT DBN.

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The earliest collection of plants in the Herbarium (DBN) National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, is represented in the set of specimens included in a leather-bound volume, a Dutch *Hortus Siccus*, owned at one time by Sir Thomas Molyneux (1661 -1773) who studied at Leyden and was later physician in Dublin (Scannell in Clokie, 1964).

The volume (Accession No.2: 1958), entitled on the spine *Herbarium Vivum* was acquired by purchase in 1957, by the National Museum of Ireland from the library, Convent of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Moore Abbey, Monasterevin, Co Kildare. The Abbey was earlier the home of the Moore family, earls of Drogheda.



The volume measuring 51x 31 x 7 cms incorporates 180 pages of drying- paper consistency. The greater part is occupied by plant-bearing pages (148) with an average of 5 specimens per page, affixed by means of gummed strips. Each plant is named, each

with two entries; the first a polynomial phrase-name in feint ink, the second in bold hand, in dark ink followed by the letters OB. The initial page of the book carries two hand-written paragraphs in Latin, according to which the plants were collected in the University Gardens at Leyden by one, Mr Gayman (this may be a phonetic rendering of a name), a pharmacist in Leyden who "ascribed names to them [the plants] but did so quite frequently without sufficient knowledge". It states that the herbarium was arranged about 1661 and, that Mr William Sherard added more suitable names from "Caspar Bauhin's Pinax and he kindly gave the names in his own hand" Bauhin's *Pinax Theatri Botanici* the then current index of plant names was published in Basel in 1623. The index to the plants (to the earliest given names, i.e. Mr Gaymans names) occupies 14 pages. The plants are unlocalised and considered to be ex *Hort. Lugd. Bat.* apart from a few which are labelled *Hort. Reg. Paris*, as [*Cortusa americana*] *Mitella diphylla* (Saxifragaceae). There is no attempt at classification. The plants are mostly European with some Asiatic and American species, many are "officinal" plants.

The specimens are in good condition after a passage of 300 years. There are indications of insect activity and some pages are water stained.

Each page incorporates a watermark – a large elephant, somewhat similar to that in Bleau's Atlas published in Amsterdam in 1649.

The volume was exhibited on the occasion of the Tercentenary of the Founding of the Chair of Physic in Trinity College, Dublin, in November, 1962. Through the kindness of Mr William O'Sullivan, Keeper of Manuscripts, Trinity College, it was learned that Thomas Molyneux, Registrar, kept the minutes of the Proceedings of the College of Physicians, Kildare Street. The handwriting in Volume I, 1694, in the hand of Thomas Molyneux was compared with the hand which wrote the Latin inscriptions in the Leyden volume, and they agree.

Thomas Molyneux entered Trinity College at the age of 15 and graduated in Arts in 1680 (Hoppen 1970). In 1683 he set out for Leyden at the age of 22 to study Medicine and remained there for two years. In 1684 he purchased for 39 Dutch guilders the *Hortus Siccus*. At Leyden he met William Sherard and appears to have resumed the friendship during Sherard's sojourn in Ireland. He wrote the first account of the "Irish Elk" and contributed the Appendix of 22 pages to Threlkeld's *Synopsis*. He was lampooned in a poem by Dean Swift entitled "Mad Mullinix and Timothy" (Hoppen, op. cit.). Members of the Molyneux family travelled and observed the landscape of Ireland, yet no specimens are known to have been preserved.

William Sherard (1658 -1728), born in Leicestershire, was considered to be the outstanding botanist of his day. His herbarium is at Oxford. In 1690 he was in Ireland as tutor to the family Sir Arthur Rawdon at Moira, Co Down. He contributed to Ray's *Stirpium* . . . published in 1694. He edited *Paradisus Batavus*. About 1700 he embarked on a continuation of Caspar Bauhin's Pinax which he never finished (Clokier 1964). He is credited as the first discoverer of *Mertensia maritima* (c. 1691).

The Leyden *Hortus Siccus* is a document of historic importance. It is at present under study and a catalogue is in preparation.

## **REFERENCES**

**CLOKIE, H. N.** (1964) *An Account of the Herbaria of the Department of Botany in the University of Oxford.* Oxford.

**HOPPEN. K. T.** (1970) *The Common Scientist In the Seventeenth Century.* London.