



NatSCA

Natural Sciences Collections Association

<http://www.natsca.org>

Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: The Herbarium at the Colchester and Essex Museum

Author(s): Heath, J. J.

Source: Heath, J. J. (1980). The Herbarium at the Colchester and Essex Museum. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter*, Vol 2 No 6, 256 - 257.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1749>

NatSCA supports open access publication as part of its mission is to promote and support natural science collections. NatSCA uses the Creative Commons Attribution License (CCAL) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/> for all works we publish. Under CCAL authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, modify, distribute, and/or copy articles in NatSCA publications, so long as the original authors and source are cited.

This would be followed by further redevelopment and expansion of the displays and work has been in hand for several years now, accumulating material for this.

It has been a matter of policy from the start that all visitors enquiries are dealt with on the spot where possible, which whilst inconvenient at times does produce a very good customer relationship, and a steady stream of donations, whilst avoiding a pile up of uncollected enquiries.

The existing state of development of the collections is dealt with in the following articles.

J. J. Heath
Keeper of Natural History

The Herbarium at the Colchester and Essex Museum

No herbarium material survived from the early museum collections except for one book of marine algae which belonged to the first Colchester Natural History Society (1872-84). This came to the Museum on the winding up of that society. Most of these specimens date from 1849-50. Another book of seaweeds was received sometime after 1935. It had originally been presented to Cranbrook School in 1871 by Mrs Gray of the British Museum and passed through at least two other ownerships before coming to this museum.

Additional marine algae have been collected locally by the present staff to develop this side of the collections.

Mosses, Liverworts and Lichens are all represented by mainly recent specimens collected by Clifford Owen and other members of staff plus a collection of Lichens from the town's Roman Wall formed by J. F. Skinner in 1978 which included a Lichenicolous Hyphomycete fungi new to the British Isles.

There are a small number of mosses from the British Bryological Society acquired on the death of Dr. Vinter, a local doctor/naturalist in 1960.

Fungi are represented by a small selection of freeze dried specimens and a few dried specimens collected by the staff. The puff balls are in the majority as a recent survey of them is being undertaken by J. F. Skinner of Southend Museum.

The Vascular plant herbarium has a reasonable coverage of the British Flora with a few specimens predating 1950 from the herbarium of G. C. Brown (1889-1967) H. E. Littlebury and Rev. J. E. Hull although in every case these are only minor holdings, with the main herbarium being elsewhere.

Among the more recent holdings, are some specimens from S. T. Jermyn (1907-73) author of the current flora of Essex, whose main herbarium is unfortunately in the Smithsonian Institute Washington, U.S.A., and B. T. Ward plus the herbarium formed by J.M. Betts as part of her degree studies.

We are currently expanding this area of the herbaria paying particular attention to alien and escaped plants and critical species groups such as Burdocks (the local flora is unreliable due to changes in the species concept within the group and we are, with the help of local societies, examining all the populations of the plant in North East Essex).

With the help of the Botanical Group of the Colchester Natural History Society, we have instigated a mapping project for Dittander (Lepidium latifolium) which has extended its known distribution considerably in this area during the two years that it has been running. These schemes, as well as a survey of local woods, are continuing and yield valuable data for the biological data bank held at the Museum.

J. J. Heath
Keeper of Natural History

The Invertebrate Collections at the Colchester and Essex Museum

Most of Colchester Museum's store of invertebrates comprises insect cabinets, and most of these, not surprisingly, hold macrolepidoptera. Between collectors, the British species of butterflies and moths are well covered.

The principal Lepidoptera collections are described below under the name of the collector.

MACROLEPIDOPTERA

A.D. Blaxill - a large and locally important collection which was donated to the Museum in 1977. Most of Blaxill's specimens were obtained between 1930 and 1950. He specialised in breeding British butterflies and produced many fine series which are housed with his moths at Colchester. Of particular note is a series of Large Tortoiseshells.

D. Baker - another large and comprehensive collection of macrolepidoptera. Baker lived in Essex and collected moths and butterflies from London and the home counties for a considerable part of his life, from 1900 to the 1950's. Each specimen is labelled with a code which refers to diaries now in the care of Colchester Museum.