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Author(s): Lambley, P.

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## HERBARIA IN THE NORFOLK MUSEUMS SERVICE

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The herbarium at the Castle Museum is only a moderate size, consisting of about 26,000 sheets of flowering plants and about 7,000 packet / sheets of non-flowering plants. The emphasis is on East Anglian plants, though in the past, through the Botanical Exchange Club, specimens were added from all over Britain so that almost all British flowering plants are represented except in some of the critical genera. The first two Presidents of the Norfolk and Norwich Museum, founded in 1825, were both notable botanists so that it is not surprising that the Museum herbarium should be part of a long and continuing interest in the botany of the county.

The first President was Sir James Edward Smith (1759-1828), the man who purchased the Linnaean collections for £1,000 and brought them to Britain. He was subsequently a founder member and first president of the Linnaean Society. Born in Norwich in 1759, he developed an early interest in botany. He studied medicine at Edinburgh and London and moved back to Norwich for the last thirty years of his life. During this time, the Linnaean collections resided in his front room and were an object of pilgrimage for many distinguished foreign and British botanists. After one such visit, Professor Schuttes of Bavaria said to a friend that 'the relics of Mohammed are not enshrined with more devotion than the collections of Linnaeus in the house of Sir James Smith in Norwich'. After his death in 1828, the collections including his own, were sold to the Linnaean Society. Despite his association with the Museum, he only gave a rather poorly labelled collection of British and foreign plants, mostly from Mauritius and Switzerland, with a few from elsewhere including 'the garden'.

Dawson Turner (1775-1858) succeeded Smith as President. He was a Yarmouth banker and an authority on cryptogams, although in later life his interests turned to archaeology, art and amassing a large library. He published a number of important works on seaweeds and with Borrer, *Lichenographia Britannica*. Most of his collections are now in the British Museum (Natural History) but we do have a good small collection of seaweeds made by him mostly from Norfolk.

Other early collections include one by the Norwich Botanic Society which is poorly labelled. A collection which is much better documented is that of John Salmon ( ? 1802-1859) who lived for several years at Thetford before moving to Godalming in Surrey. His collection is backed up with diaries which have been useful in tracking down old localities for some of the Breckland rarities. Another local collection given in the 19th century was that of James Paget who made an extensive collection around Yarmouth. His collection includes specimens of the now extinct Senecio palustris.

It was not until 1928 that a post of natural history assistant was created and the museum was very fortunate to appoint Mr. Edward Ellis, or Ted Ellis as he is known to his many friends and acquaintances. From then until his retirement from the museum in 1956, he was responsible for rescuing many collections which are likely otherwise to have been lost. One find was a collection made by a local botanist called Fred Robinson, part of which is now in the British Museum (Natural History) but the more interesting, with important specimens of species like Calamagrostis stricta and Cucabulus baccifer, is now at Norwich. A collection by Miss Davie given in 1929, mostly from one Broadland parish, has provided a useful comparison with modern surveys in connection with the pollution problems in the Broads. A major addition to the herbarium was that of H. D. Geldart in 1942. His collection included the herbaria of many other local botanists and included much Botanical Exchange Club material.

In recent years, we have acquired the herbarium of the East Anglian office of the Nature Conservancy Council which includes many useful specimens from the Eastern counties. We have also added many aquatic plant specimens as a result of the various surveys taking place in Broadland and elsewhere. Our bramble collection has also been greatly improved through the activities of a local botanologist, Alec Bull, and we now have one isotype.

The foreign flowering plant herbarium is rather small and generally inadequately labelled, but does include a fine collection of arctic plants collected by Col. Fielden from northern Russia. Another collection of scientifically little value has labels of some sociological interest e.g. 'the aboriginals swarmed up the tree to get this for me' - the nomenclature was described by a former colleague as Zulu bush!

In the cryptogams there is a good collection of myxomycetes recently checked by B. Ing. Many of the specimens were collected by H. G. Howard, a guide lecturer at the museum before the war. Rusts and smuts are quite well represented but the collections are rather weak at present in other fungi. The basis of both the moss and lichen herbaria are collections made by a Suffolk botanist, Arthur Mayfield, in the 1920's and 1930's. Most of these collections were made round the parish of Mendlesham in Suffolk. In recent years the lichen herbarium has been extensively added to. Although still primarily an East Anglian collection, there are specimens from other parts of Britain, especially south-west England, Wales, Yorkshire and parts of Scotland. There is also a small foreign collection.

Elsewhere in the Service there is a good collection of Breckland plants by H. Dixon-Hewitt at Thetford and King's Lynn has a small general herbarium of mostly local interest.

Peter Lambley  
Norfolk Museums