

*Buxbaumia aphylla*

Spotlight

1. Given by Mr. Hooker in May. 1807.

2. Gathered in his company, from the original habitat in October 1807.

### *Buxbaumia aphylla*: an historic specimen from C.J.F. Bunbury's herbarium

Sir Charles James Fox Bunbury (1809–1886) of Barton Hall, Suffolk, bequeathed to Cambridge University (CGE) the large herbarium he acquired during a long and active botanical life. For over a century it remained in storage, but in recent years the vascular plants have been unwrapped from the bundles in which they were stored and curated. In 2018 R.J.F. asked if he could consult the Suffolk bryophytes in Bunbury's herbarium, and he and C.D.P. made a preliminary survey of his bryophyte collection. As a result C.D.P. and C.T. are currently working to curate the specimens into clearly labelled, modern herbarium folders. Bunbury collected bryophytes in Suffolk, elsewhere in Britain and Europe, Madeira, Teneriffe, South Africa and Brazil, and he received mosses from correspondents such as his sister-in-law Katherine Lyell from Simla (now Shimla) in India and her older sister Mary Lyell from North America.

Our image of *Buxbaumia aphylla* comes from a herbarium sheet Bunbury acquired with the herbarium of the Suffolk lawyer Francis King Eagle (1785–1856), which was bought for him by his father on Eagle's death. Eagle's specimens are both fascinating and frustrating. Fascinating as he received material from many of the leading bryologists of the early 19th century, including William Borrer, Hugh Davies, James Dickson, Edward Forster, William Gardiner, Joseph D. Hooker, Ellen Hutchins, Dawson Turner, William Wilson and Joseph Woods. Frustrating as many specimens are neither accurately localised nor dated, in contrast to Bunbury's own bryophytes.

Eagle's herbarium includes two plants of *Buxbaumia aphylla*. One was 'Given by Mr. Hooker in May. 1807'. William J. Hooker (1785–1865) famously discovered a small population of *Buxbaumia* in a plantation at Sprowston, Norwich, in December 1805, and this sparked his immensely productive interest in bryophytes. He refound 21 plants there in October 1806 ('a glorious sight'), although by November a great many had been destroyed by birds and insects, and the plant was still present in March 1807 (Mea Allen, *The Hookers of Kew* (1967)). Eagle's second specimen, 'Gathered in his [Hooker's] company, from the original habitat in October 1807', may be the last record from this site.

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