

ARNOLD THOMPSON (1876-1959)

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This is one in a series of articles about prominent British and Irish field-bryologists of the past. The author would be very pleased to learn of any information which supplements its content.

A Social and Biographical History of British and Irish Field-bryologists is also available on-line at <http://britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk/>

Botanical career

Arnold Thompson joined the British Bryological Society in 1931, was secretary from 1936 until 1947, president in 1948-9, and was elected an honorary member in 1952.

He was particularly interested in *Sphagnum*, acted as the BBS's joint referee for the genus at one time, and helped to revise the *Census Catalogue of British Sphagna* (edited by W. R. Sherrin, 1937 and 1946).

He was one of the old guard in the BBS after the Second World War, and as secretary he stood in the way of younger tyros such as Richards and Wallace when they sought to revitalise the BBS in the post-war years. The clash of generations led to his becoming unpopular in the BBS, and he resigned as referee for *Sphagnum*.

Family background and biography

Arnold Thompson was born at Rawdon, Yorkshire on June 15th 1876, the second of three sons of John Thompson (1831/2-1894) and Mary (*née* Rigg, 1849-1915). They married in 1872.

John Thompson was a cloth-manufacturer in 1881 (employing three men and two women), and a flannel-manufacturer in 1891. He was born in Rawdon, a son of John Thompson (1791-1864), a clothier, and Hannah (*née* Stonehouse, 1800-1872).

Mary Rigg was a daughter of John Rigg (1815-1869), a butcher in Rawdon, and Margaret (*née* Parkinson, 1816), daughter of another butcher, William Parkinson (born 1791).

Arnold's elder brother was Philip (1873-1929, who was a sanitary engineer in 1901), and his younger brother was Gilbert (1880-1935, who was a joiner in 1901). Arnold was an art student in 1901, and after graduating from London University he taught at the Friends' School for Quakers in Saffron Walden.

In 1902/3 he went to Tübingen University in order to study further, before returning to teach at Bootham School (1903-6). From there he transferred to King Edward VII School at Sheffield.

Thompson married Silva Bell (1889-1974) at Kendal in 1917. Silva was a daughter of Herbert Bell (born 1856/7), a photographer, and Mary (*née* Taylor, 1862/3).

In the 1930s he retired to 23 Regent Crescent, Skipton, where he lived for the rest of his life and died on January 27th 1959, being survived by his wife Silva.