

ERNEST CHARLES HORRELL (1870-1944)

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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/>

Bryological career

Horrell played an important administrative role in the early years of the Moss Exchange Club (the forerunner of the British Bryological Society). He joined the MEC in 1898 and by ... was ... However, he left the Club in 1904. His known bryological career was therefore short but influential. Having forsaken bryology, Horrell took up the study of beetles.

He discovered *Aplodon wormskioldii* on Widdybank Fell, Teesdale, Co. Durham in 1901.

His herbarium of about 4,000 plants was given to Dr. William Arthur Sledge (1904-1991) of the Department of Botany at Leeds University, and is now at Leeds Museum. Further plants are at Bolton Museum and Art Gallery (including some mosses), the Natural History Museum in London, at Nottingham Museum, Oxford, and Wisley.

With Frederick James Chittenden (who joined the Moss Exchange Club in 1906) Horrell co-authored *Field Studies in Natural History* (1902). Horrell also wrote *On Nature Study* (1904).

Family background and biography

Ernest Charles Horrell was born at Raunds, Northamptonshire in 1870, the second of five children of Thomas Henry Horrell (1842-1906) and Emma Ann (*née* Weeks, 1841-1906). Emma was a daughter of Charles Weeks (1805/6-1889), a master miller at Walkhampton in Devon. Emma was a governess in 1861.

Thomas was a Wesleyan minister who came from Callington in Cornwall, but whose career took him to different parts of the country. He was living at Raunds by 1867/8, when Ernest's elder sister Frances Elizabeth was born, and the family was still there at the time of Ernest's birth in 1870. Then they moved to Walls in Shetland where a second son Stanley was born in 1871/2, followed by Louisa Mary in 1872/3, and Annie in 1875/6. Annie married Charles Henry Bebbington (1882-1965), and died in 1936.

By 1881, Thomas and Emma were back in England, at Clifford cum Boston in Yorkshire, then Buxton, Derbyshire in 1891, and St. Helens in Lancashire in 1901. Ernest had left home by 1891, when he was an unmarried assistant schoolmaster at Doncaster, Yorkshire. By 1899-1900, when he joined the MEC, he was living in Denmark Hill in south-east London, and by 1901 he was a lecturer in botany and living at Camberwell, London. His youngest sister Annie was living with him in 1901, while Louisa Mary (who was an art student in 1891, and also unmarried, like Annie in 1901) lived with her parents. Frances Elizabeth was a governess in 1891, living with her parents. Stanley was a tailor in Leeds by 1901.

Ernest's collegiate career was not without blemish, for *The Times* of May 1st, 1888 reported that "Mr Bruce, stipendiary magistrate had before him at the Leeds Town Hall yesterday the case of Ernest Charles Horrell, 18, student at the Yorkshire College. The prisoner.... was charged with stealing books from Yorkshire College and Leeds free library. The evidence showed that books had frequently been missed from the two institutions. On the 25th ult. Detective-officer Bates secreted himself in the Yorkshire college, and in consequence of what he saw he followed the prisoner, who was a student at the college, and questioned him about the missing property. Horrell admitted stealing books from the college and the free library. With one or two exceptions, the books dealt with mathematics and physical science, and their total value was stated to be about £5, 5s. The prisoner pleaded guilty. The father of the prisoner, Mr A. Vintner of Woodhouse Grove, Apperley, Mr W. Lee, clerk to the Leeds School Board, Professor Bodington, Principal of the Yorkshire College, and Mr C. Ingham all gave the prisoner an excellent character. Mr Bruce said that this was a very melancholy case, but the prisoner knew what he was about, and must have known he was pursuing not only a wrong course but a dangerous one. He could not do less than sentence the prisoner to one month's imprisonment upon each charge – the terms to be consecutive – but without hard labour."

Might "Mr C. Ingham" who testified to Horrell's otherwise good character have been a misprint for William Ingham, who was a member of staff at York Training College, and who became secretary of the Moss Exchange Club from 1903 until 1922?

Ernest's career recovered from this episode, as he was an assistant schoolmaster three years later, and lecturer in botany in 1901. In 1902 and 1906, he was living at Elmhurst, London Road, Chelmsford, and teaching biology at a school.

Ernest married Ada Beatrice Wilson (1871/2-1934) in Chelmsford in 1904. Ada trained as a schoolmistress. She was a daughter of Alfred Wilson, a licensed victualler in Kensington, London in 1871. Ernest and Beatrice had a son Charles Wilson Horrell (1905-1972).

By 1911 Horrell was living in Scarborough, Yorkshire, and working as a self-employed "clothier and outfitter (dealer)". He was elected to membership of the Scarborough Field Naturalists' Society on February 9th of that year. He became secretary of the society in 1912, and president in 1914.

Horrell moved from Scarborough to Leeds in 1914 in order to take over as manager at one of his brother's several clothing shops. He joined Leeds Naturalists' Club in the same year, and remained a member until 1928, when he moved to Bradford. He left Bradford for Mansfield before the Second World War, and died at Nottingham in 1944.

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