

## ROBERT KAYE GREVILLE (1794-1866)

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This is one in a series 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*

Much of Greville's time in the field was spent in the Scottish Highlands, and his huge collection of plants today forms a core of the herbarium at the Botanic Garden in Edinburgh.

Together with W.J. Hooker and G.A. Walker Arnott, Greville found a number of mosses new to Britain as they jointly explored the Scottish Highlands, including *Blindia caespiticia*, *Campylophyllum halleri*, *Cirriphyllum cirrosum* and *Heterocladium dimorphum* on Ben Lawers. Greville also added to the known Scottish bryoflora the liverworts *Anastrophyllum saxicola*, *Cephalozia lunulifolia*, *Frullania microphylla*, *F. teneriffae*, *Gymnomitrium corallioides*, *Jungermannia gracillima*, *Marchesinia mackaii*, *Mastigophora woodsii*, *Metzgeria conjugata*, *M. leptoneura*, *Plagiochila carringtonii*, *Reboulia hemisphaerica* and *Riccia fluitans*.

As well as collecting insects and molluscs, Greville also studied diatoms with G.A. Walker Arnott, and in addition collaborated with the Reverend David Landsborough.

Greville's most important contribution to bryological literature was his illustrated *Scottish Cryptogamic Flora* (1822-28).

### *Family background*

Several of Greville's ancestors were of great prominence, and taken together they comprise an impressively eclectic sweep through English social history.

Robert's father, also Robert (1759-1830), was rector of Edlaston and Wyaston in Derbyshire, and son of Caleb Greville, gent., of London. Before he died Caleb had been living at St. George, Hanover Square, London, where he was a clerk at the church in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and seems to have been one of a junior branch of the Greville family of Brooke in Wiltshire and Beauchamp's Court in Warwickshire.

A Mary Greville who died in December 1769 ended her life in or near Caleb's residence at St. George, Hanover Square, having previously lived at "Moulsey" (Molesey), Surrey, near Hampton Court Palace. She was very likely the widow of Algernon Greville (c.1677-1720) of Brooke, and born Mary Somerset (1692-1769),

daughter of Lord Arthur Somerset, whose mother, Mary, the first Duchess of Beaufort (1630-c.1715) was a keen and accomplished lepidopterist, gardener and collector of floral illustrations. The Somersets were descended from Edward III, and they and the Grevilles also became linked with the Bentincks, from whom the present royal family is descended. I have not established Caleb Greville's connection with Algernon, who was a son of Fulke Greville (1643-1710), 5<sup>th</sup> Baron Brooke of Beauchamp's Court. Also of Brooke, Charles Francis Greville (1749-1810) was the second son of the Earl of Warwick and a nephew of Sir William Hamilton the diplomatist and vulcanologist. Like his uncle, C.F. Greville had scientific interests and was a close friend of Sir Joseph Banks, to whom he introduced Erasmus Darwin. His collection of 15,000 geological specimens was bought for the British Museum after his death. He impregnated Emma Hart, and subsequently passed her to his uncle Sir William, whom she married, only for Horatio Nelson to steal her affections.

RKG's mother, born Dorothy Chaloner in 1766, came of no less illustrious stock. Her great-great-great-great-grandfather, Sir Thomas Chaloner (1521-1565) was a prominent Elizabethan, and his son, also Sir Thomas (1561-1615), married Elizabeth Fleetwood, whose family knew the Cromwells. Their son, Reverend Edward Chaloner, married Ann Ingoldsby, whose mother was Oliver Cromwell's cousin. Sir Thomas junior was a soldier, statesman, scholar and natural historian who travelled to Italy in 1580, where he consorted with that country's learned men. While there he visited the pope's alum-works, and noticed the surrounding vegetation's similarity to that of some parts of his own estate at Guisborough in Yorkshire. On his return home in about 1600 he discovered alum there and opened the first alum-mines in England. These became immensely profitable, wherefore Charles I claimed them for the Crown. The Chaloners understandably did not feel endeared to royalty after this treatment, which goes a long way to explaining their friendly terms with the Cromwells, and why they were Parliamentarians at the time of the Civil War. From still earlier times, the Chaloners or their spouses descended from many of the European royal families, including the line of Mortimer, Percy, Plantagenet and William the Conqueror, as far back as the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Direct lines go back to the Kings of Wessex, King of Wales, High King of Ireland, and a number of Roman Catholic and Russian orthodox saints.

Notwithstanding all this prominent family-background, the most botanically interesting element of RKG's genealogical provenance arises through his mother's grandmother, who was born Dorothy Richardson in 1712 at Bierley in Yorkshire, daughter of Richard Richardson (1663-1741), the famous botanist who was an authority on mosses. She became the second wife of Sir John Lister Kaye, whose family made a fortune from mining coal at Wakefield. Their daughter, Dorothy Kaye (c.1744-c.1820) married Robert Chaloner and their daughter Dorothy in turn married Robert Greville, and they begat RKG. Thus, Richard Richardson was Robert Kaye Greville's great-great-grandfather on Robert's mother's side of the family. One can imagine Richard Richardson, with his young daughter on his knee, imbuing her with a love and lore of plants which passed down through the three Dorothys to RKG.

*Biography*

Greville was born at Bishop Auckland in County Durham, but while he was still very young the family moved to Derbyshire. He had three younger brothers – Chaloner (born in 1796), Henry Methold (1797-1861) who became a druggist and chemist at Northampton, and Eden Septimus (1803-1890), who took holy orders and became rector at Bonsall in Derbyshire in 1833. By 1861 Eden was priest at St. Paul's in London.

Robert Greville studied and drew plants while a boy, and as a young man he was fond of his rod and gun. Intended for the medical profession, he spent four years at London and Edinburgh. However, on becoming financially independent, he settled in Edinburgh after marrying in 1816. His bride was Dorothy Charlotte Eden, daughter of Sir John Eden (1740-1816) of Windlestone, Co. Durham. Sir John's brother, William (1744-1814), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron of Auckland, statesman and diplomatist, married Eleanor, sister of Sir Gilbert Elliot, later Earl of Minto, and Nelson's friend; William and Eleanor begat George Eden (1784-1849), who became governor-general of India.

Robert and Dorothy had six children – Charlotte Dorothea (1818/19-1890, who married the Reverend David Hogarth, rector of Portland in 1857), then Robert Northmore Greville (1820-1879), followed by Euphemia (born 1825/26, who married George Frederick Williamson at Edinburgh in 1847), Eden Kaye Greville (c.1824/26-1872, who married Rosa Letitia Michael in 1850), Emmeline (born 1826/27, who married Henry Drummond in 1845), and Chaloner Greville (1828/29-1911). The eldest son, Robert Northmore Greville, became a noted coleopterist. Eden Kaye Greville was a solicitor, and lived with his family of two sons and a daughter in St. James's Square, Notting Hill, London. Chaloner Greville took holy orders, and ended his career as priest at Beaumaris on Anglesey.

In the early 1820s, the Grevilles lived at 1, Wharton Place, Edinburgh. In 1841 they were at 31, George Square, and when he died in 1866 RKG was living at Ormelie Villa, Murrayfield, Edinburgh.

Greville had not long been in Edinburgh before he was reading papers on cryptogamic botany before the Wernerian and Botanical Societies of that city, and accompanying W.J. Hooker, Robert Graham, George Walker Arnott and other botanists on excursions. Neither requiring nor caring to take up his professional yoke, thereafter he devoted himself to botany. In 1823 he began to publish his *Scottish Cryptogamic Flora* in monthly parts, drawing and colouring the illustrations himself. This work extended to six yearly volumes containing 360 octavo plates. Some of Greville's original and beautiful coloured drawings lie today with the plants they represent in the herbarium at Edinburgh Botanic Garden.

By the mid-1820s he was giving popular lectures on botany in Edinburgh, and he formed extensive collections, not only of plants but also of insects, marine crustaceans, and terrestrial and freshwater molluscs.

Throughout his adult life, Greville retained interest in a variety of cultural activities, and took an active role in various social matters, such as opposing slavery and promoting philanthropic concerns. In 1856 he was elected MP for Edinburgh.

During his later years Greville lost much of his private means, and paid his way by executing and selling drawings and paintings of Highland landscape.

*Acknowledgement*

I thank Russell Coote for supplying information about the early history of the Chaloners and their relatives.