

WILLIAM HENRY PEARSON (1849-1923)

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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

Pearson was stimulated in his early bryological career by Benjamin Carrington (1827-1893), who specialized in liverworts, and Pearson followed his mentor's lead. Richard Spruce also maintained a helpful correspondence with Pearson.

Carrington and Pearson issued the first of their *Hepaticae Britannicae Exsiccatae* in 1878, and Pearson continued to issue sets after Carrington died in 1893. Ulster Museum, Belfast has 75 specimens of *Hepaticae Britannicae Exsiccatae Fasc. IV numbers 216-290* only (1890), acquired from the herbarium of Queens University, Belfast, as well as a duplicate of the same volume from the collections of Belfast Museum and Art Gallery.

Pearson also wrote numerous articles about liverworts for botanical journals, beginning with *Harpanthus flotovianus* in 1879, and continuing to the 1920s.

He discovered *Cephalozia hibernica* in Killarney in 1894, and wrote *Hepaticae of the British Isles* (2 volumes, 1899 and 1902). Pearson also took interest in ferns and alpine flowering plants.

He joined the Moss Exchange Club in 1908, and was elected an honorary member in the same year. He was elected vice-President of the newly formed British Bryological Society in 1923.

His herbarium is at the Natural History Museum in London, with additional plants at Bolton Museum. 100 of his Welsh liverworts were sold to the National Museum of Wales at Cardiff in 1913. Manchester Museum has bryophytes that he collected from 1878 onwards.

Family background and biography

William Henry Pearson was born on July 22nd 1849 at Pendleton, near Manchester, Lancashire, the eldest child of Thomas Pearson (1826/7-1875), sub-manager at a printing works, and Mary Hannah (*née* Pendlington or Pellington, 1830). Thomas was born in Salford, Lancashire, and Mary was a native of Wallsend, Northumberland, daughter of Ralph Pellington (1815-1872) and his first wife Eleanor or Ellen (*née* Makepiece). Ralph Pendlington was the youngest of eight children born to George Pendlington (born ?1774) and Margaret (*née* Heppell, c.1774), daughter of John Heppell (born c. 1750) and Elizabeth (*née* Cooper, c.1750).

After William was born, Thomas and Mary had five more children: Elizabeth Eleanor (born 1852), Mary Emma (1855/6), Thomas Alfred (1857), James (1861/2) and Ada (1867). In 1851 the family lived at [...]. In 1861 they were at 9, High Street, Pendleton. By 1871 they had moved to 109 Florin Street, Pendleton, and in 1881 the widowed Mary was living with William at 115 Church Street, Pendleton.

Elizabeth was a dressmaker in 1871, Mary was a dressmaker's apprentice in 1871, Thomas was a yarn agent's cashier in 1881, and James was a warehouseman (shipping) in 1881.

After leaving school, Pearson went to work for a firm of yarn agents in Manchester, and eventually set up in the same line of business in Manchester on his own account. In 1882 he married Annie Dearden (born 1855/6), daughter of Robert and Mary Dearden. Robert (born 1804/5) was a retired cotton-manufacturer in 1861. They lived in Eccles during the late 1880s and early '90s, where Pearson met and befriended Carrington, whose medical practice was in the town and where he also taught a botany class. By 1901 William and his family had moved to Knutsford; by 1911 he had moved to Withington, where he lived for the remainder of his life.

Pearson's obituaries in the *Manchester Guardian* and *Manchester City News* relate that he was particularly noted for his climbing, literary and botanical interests. For example, he was an active member of the Rucksack Club.

William and Annie Pearson had four daughters: Lucy Carrington Pearson (1883-1971), who married Mari Paul Johan Wertheim in 1906), Phyllis Marion Pearson (1885-1972, who married William Fenton Higgins in 1915; he was a wealthy brick-manufacturer), Hilda Hewitson Pearson (born 1887), and Annie Theodora Pearson (1892-1971, who married Walter William Wadsworth in 1921). Lucy and Paul Wertheim established art galleries in Derbyshire, London and Brighton, and Lucy wrote *Adventure in Art* (1947).

Pearson died at his home in Palatine Road, Withington, Manchester on April 19th 1923, and was buried in the Southern Cemetery, Manchester.

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