

HENRY BOSWELL (1835-1897)

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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/>

[portrait in *J. Bot.* (1897) 35: 132-137; *Manchester Guardian* 6.2.1897; also at Hunt Inst., 2008]

Bryological career

Boswell lived most - if not all - his life in Oxford. He knew and was a friend of Augustin Ley while Ley was at Oxford and after he graduated. Ley went on to become an accomplished bryologist. Other bryologists who graduated from the university, and whom Boswell may have helped with their bryology include Edward Cleminshaw, who graduated in 1874, and Hampden Gurney Jameson, who was a student at Oxford from 1874 until 1877. Boswell also knew the botanist George Claridge Druce (who traded as a chemist in Oxford), as well as William Wilson and John Bland Wood in north-west England.

Boswell was particularly active botanically in the 1850s, and was certainly studying mosses by 1860, when his article 'Oxfordshire Mosses' was published in the *Journal of Botany*. A second paper, 'The Mosses of Oxfordshire and the neighbourhood of Oxford' appeared in the *Journal of Botany* in 1872. His records of mosses were included in Druce's *Flora of Oxfordshire* (1886). He also co-edited (with C.C.P. Hobkirk) the *London Catalogue of British Mosses* (1877), with a second edition (with F.A. Lees) in 1881, and also acted as referee of mosses for the Botanical Exchange Club. He joined the Botanical Locality Record Club (forerunner of the BEC) in 1876.

His herbarium is at the Botanic Garden in Oxford, with further specimens in the Stephen T. Olney herbarium at Brown University, U.S.A. His letters are at the Natural History Museum in London.

Family background and biography

Henry Boswell was born on January 21st 1835, the eldest child of six born to Francis Boswell (1802/3-1862), and Jane Duncan (*née* Lee, 1804/5-1862) who was a daughter of Joseph and Sarah Lee of Shoreditch.

Francis Boswell manufactured portmanteaux and bags at Cornmarket, Oxford. He employed five men in 1851, and four men and five boys in 1861.

Francis and Jane married in Paddington, London in 1833. They had six children – Henry, who followed his father into the family business in Cornmarket, Oxford; Edward (born 1837/8), who became a cabinet-maker and later upholsterer; Jane Duncan (1841-1906), who married Frederick Warland in 1881; Francis (Frank, 1844/5-1882), who joined the family business but was a photographer in Frome, Somerset in 1881; Mary Ann (1846-1879) who did not marry; and Eliza Letitia (1847/8->1900) who did not marry.

Henry was a trunk-maker in 1861, and inherited the family business at the age of 25 from his father. By 1881 he manufactured “portmanteaux, trunks, bags, dressing cases, & Co.”, employing four men at premises in Cornmarket Street. The Boswells were also hatters, hosiers, and shirt-makers.

Henry Boswell married Catherine Martha Lucy in 1868. As with Henry, doubt surrounds the year in which Catherine was born – possibly around 1816, but perhaps as early as 1813/4. She was 68 when she died in 1888, which would put her birth at 1819 or 1820. In any event, Catherine was significantly older than Henry, and there were no children of their marriage. Henry was her third husband; she was born Catherine Martha Jennings, daughter of Jonah Jennings, a lead merchant, and had married William Lillington in 1837. William Lillington died in 1849, and Catherine married secondly William Castle Lucy, fishmonger and gentleman, in 1853. He died in 1861.

Henry and Catherine moved from Cornmarket Street to live at 109, Langholme, Woodstock Road, St. Giles, Oxford, but Catherine died in 1888, and Henry died on February 4th, 1897 at Warnefield Asylum in Oxford.

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