

HENRY WILLIAM LETT (1838-1920)

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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

Lett studied bryophytes from about 1860. He is credited with encouraging and assisting the Reverend Cosslett Herbert Waddell to establish the Moss Exchange Club in 1896, and published *Hepatics of the British Isles* (1902), as well as 'A Census Report on the Mosses of Ireland' (*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 32(B): 165-6) in 1915.

He was a referee for the Moss Exchange Club in 1909.

Lett did not confine his botanical interests to bryophytes, but studied all plants: lichens, algae, bryophytes, vascular plants, and fungi. He led the first Irish fungus foray in 1883, as well as publishing *The Fungi of Northern Ireland* (1886). He joined the Belfast Field Club in 1878.

His plants are at Ulster Museum in Belfast, the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin, Merseyside Museum in Liverpool, and Cardiff.

Family background and biography

Lett was born at Hillsborough, County Down on December 4th 1838, the second of four children born to the Reverend Charles Lett (1804/5-1887, rector of Hillsborough) and Elizabeth Mary (*née* Corry, 1800/1). Their other children were Charles Marcus (born 1836-7) of the Antrim Rifles, Elizabeth Mary Corry (1841/2-1885), and the Reverend Francis Neville (1842/3-1883).

Charles Lett was a son of Charles Lett (1773-1853) of Rathsilla and Tincurry, County Wexford, and his second wife Anne (*née* Hincks). Charles Lett senior was a son of Thomas Lett and Elizabeth (*née* Whitney).

H.W. Lett's mother Elizabeth Mary was a daughter of Colonel Marcus Corry (1770-1847) of Homra House, County Down, and Elizabeth Mary Neville (*née* Fiske, 1772-1855). Elizabeth was a daughter of the Reverend John Fiske of Skimpling, near Bury St. Edmonds, Suffolk, and Susan (*née* Neville).

Thomas Hughes Corry (1859-1883), who was a relative of Elizabeth Mary's, drowned in Lough Gill, County Sligo while botanising. Several members of the Corry family were also politically active and married aristocracy; accounts of their lives can be found in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Marcus Corry's parents were the Right Honorable Isaac Corry (1723-1809), who was the last Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, and Mary (or Maria, *née* Pollock, 1752-1831), daughter of John Pollock of Newry. Isaac Corry's father was also Isaac, of Abbey Yard, Newry.

In 1865, Henry William Lett married Louisa Catherine Tandy (born c.1842), daughter of John Tandy and Elizabeth Penrose (*née* Cherry). Henry and Louisa had four children: the Reverend Charles Henry Tandy Lett of White Waltham, Maidenhead, Annabella Louisa Kathleen, Mary L., and Evangeline Maud Elizabeth.

Lett passed his working life as a country rector within 30 miles of Hillsborough, his birthplace.