

JOHN BLAND WOOD (1813-1890)

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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

Wood is particularly interesting for his known and possible connections in the world of 19th century bryology. He employed Richard Buxton (1786-1865) to collect bryophytes for him, and knew Buxton's friend, John Nowell (1802-1867). Furthermore, Thomas Stansfield (1826/7-1879), eldest son of Nowell's lifelong friend Abraham Stansfield (1802-1880) had a nursery at Pontefract, and Abraham Stansfield (born 1837, younger son of Abraham Stansfield senior) had a nursery at Kersall Moor, Broughton, not far from Wood's home. In addition, Eliza Ann Wilson (1826-1872), William Wilson's step-daughter by Wilson's wife's first marriage, was at Wood's home in Broughton at the time of the 1851 Census Return. Wood's first wife came from Manchester, which was Eliza Ann Wilson's home town too, and Wood also named a son after William Wilson.

Wood compiled *Flora Mancuniensis* (1840), and contributed to Joseph Dickinson's *Flora of Liverpool* (1851) and *Supplement* (1855).

His herbarium is at Halifax Museum, with additional plants at Kew. Manchester Museum has plants that he collected from 1850 onwards. The Bromfield herbarium in Hampshire also has plants that he collected from various parts of the kingdom between 1840 and 1844. His letters are at Kew, and in the William Wilson correspondence at the Natural History Museum in London, with further letters at Liverpool Museum.

Family background

John Bland Wood was born at or near Pontefract, Yorkshire on December 3rd 1813, a son of James Wood and Mary Bland. His genealogical provenance has yet to be elucidated, but Ackworth lies just to the south of Pontefract, and at the time of the 1841 Census Return Frances Augusta Bland, was living as an elderly spinster at Hundhill (or Houndhill) Hall, Ackworth with Judith Bland, 35, and also unmarried. Both gave their means of subsistence as "independent", indicating that neither lady had to earn their living; indeed they retained eight servants who saw to their daily needs.

Frances Bland was born Frances Augusta Davison Bland in 1780/81. The name of Davison Bland arose after Ann Bland married her cousin Sir Thomas Davison of Blakeston (or Blakiston), County Durham in 1706. The name of Bland died with heirless relatives of Ann's in the mid- 18th century, whereupon Sir Thomas Davison moved to the Blands' main estate at Kippax Park between Leeds and Pontefract, and took the name of Davison Bland. In the early 18th century the immensely wealthy Blands also held land at Hulme, near Manchester, as well as Hough End, not far from Hulme. However, gambling and irresolute life-styles, together with a failure to produce heirs led to extinction of the Bland family's name and position later in the 18th century.

Nor is John Bland Wood's paternal provenance at all clear. However, an old Yorkshire family of Woods that descended from Charles Montague, 1st Earl of Halifax is one possibility. In the 19th century, Hickleton and Garrowby was the seat of Sir Francis Lindley Wood (1771-1846), a few miles from Ackworth. Sir Francis was High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1814-5. In 1798, Sir Francis married Anne Buck (daughter of Samuel Buck, Esq., of New Grange, Recorder of Leeds), and their son Charles Wood (1800-1885) entered politics and became Chancellor of the Exchequer, First Lord of the Admiralty during the Crimean War, Secretary of State for India and Lord Privy Seal, as well as 1st Viscount Halifax.

John Bland Wood received his early education at Pontefract, and subsequently followed a medical training at Dublin, Edinburgh, London, and the University of Heidelberg in Germany. In 1836 he graduated M.D. at Heidelberg, and Member Of the Royal College of Surgeons in London. In 1859 he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons.

Wood took up botany in about 1839, and was most active botanically in the 1840s, '50s and '60s, latterly devoting himself particularly to mosses, and corresponding with William Wilson, Wilhelm Schimper, Frederick Price Marrat, and others. He employed Richard Buxton (a shoemaker of Manchester) to collect for him.

In 1836 he married Elizabeth Jackson in Manchester (Elizabeth's home town). Their eldest child was John Jackson Wood, who was christened in Pontefract on July 31st, 1837. Wood set up in practice as a surgeon and general practitioner in Broughton and Salford, and he and Elizabeth had four more children: James Bland (born 1843), William Wilson (1845), Mary Elizabeth (1847/8) and Henry (Harry) Bland (1852/3). The family lived in Camp Street, Broughton continuously from at least 1851. John Jackson Wood was a mechanical draughtsman in 1861, James Bland Wood was a warehouse salesman in 1861, and Henry Bland Wood became a drug merchant.

Wood's wife Elizabeth predeceased him by many years, and in 1873 he married secondly Elizabeth Mercy Carter (1831-1891). Wood's health began to deteriorate, and he started to withdraw from general practice from about 1875. He became an invalid, and failing sight deprived him of his ability to study mosses.

Wood died at his residence in Swinbourne Grove, Withington, near Manchester on February 11th 1890, having moved there from Broughton about two years previously.