

ROBERT MACKENZIE STARK (1815-1873)

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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/>

Botanical career

Stark wrote an article 'Muscology of Cirencester' (*Annals of Natural History* (1841), *Marine Aquarium* (1857), *A Popular History of British Mosses* (1854; 2nd edition 1860), and articles in the *Transactions of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh* (1866 and 1873).

He added *Lepidozia cupressina* to the known Scottish flora. His herbarium is at Bristol Museum.

Family background and biography

Robert Mackenzie Stark was born on June 17th 1815 at Dirleton, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland, a son of the Reverend William Stark (1772-1834) and Elizabeth (*née* Mackenzie, died 1862).

William Stark was a son of Richard Stark of Auchtermuchty, and became minister at Airdrie before moving to Dirleton in 1805. Elizabeth Mackenzie was a daughter of Robert Mackenzie, town clerk of Dumbarton. William and Elizabeth had eight children, including two sets of twins: Richard (born 1805, H.E.I.C.S. who went out to Bombay), twins Margaret and Mary (1810), Robert and his twin brother Duncanson (1815), George Gibb (1817-1897, who became a merchant at Leith), Margaret Mollison (1819-22) and Elizabeth Helen (1822).

Robert married Margaret Landsborough (born c.1823) of Stevenston, Ayrshire at Stevenston in 1848. For many years, Stark was a nurseryman at Edinburgh, and had a fine collection of alpine plants. In 1851 he and Margaret were living (without children) at 2, Grove Street, St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, where he was trading as a seed merchant and nurseryman.

He died at 7 Grafton Street, London, on September 29th 1873, at the age of 58.