

THE FEMALE BOTANISTS OF THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

QUENTIN GROOM & LOUISE MARSH

Women were often excluded from scientific societies in the 19th century. Nevertheless, they contributed actively to natural history and botanical exchange clubs (see *New Journal of Botany* 4.2, pp. 95–103). These contributions are evidenced by their numerous herbarium specimens. We know very little about the lives of these women, but unlike many people of the time their handwriting and signatures are preserved, as are the plants that they collected on their travels.

Below we name some of the active female botanists of the 19th and early 20th century. They were active in all areas of botany: they collected plants, exchanged specimens, named new taxa, wrote books and led botanical organisations. These are only a selection of the women involved

in botany at the time, but by the 1930s almost 20% of botanists active in Britain and Ireland were women. Despite the social restraints on the activities of women at the time, they were still able to make an important contribution to botany.

Marian Sarah Ogilvie Farquharson (1846 – 1912) deserves particular mention. She campaigned for the admission of women to the Linnean Society of London. She achieved her goal in 1905, when 15 women were admitted, even though it wasn't until 1908 that her own application was accepted.

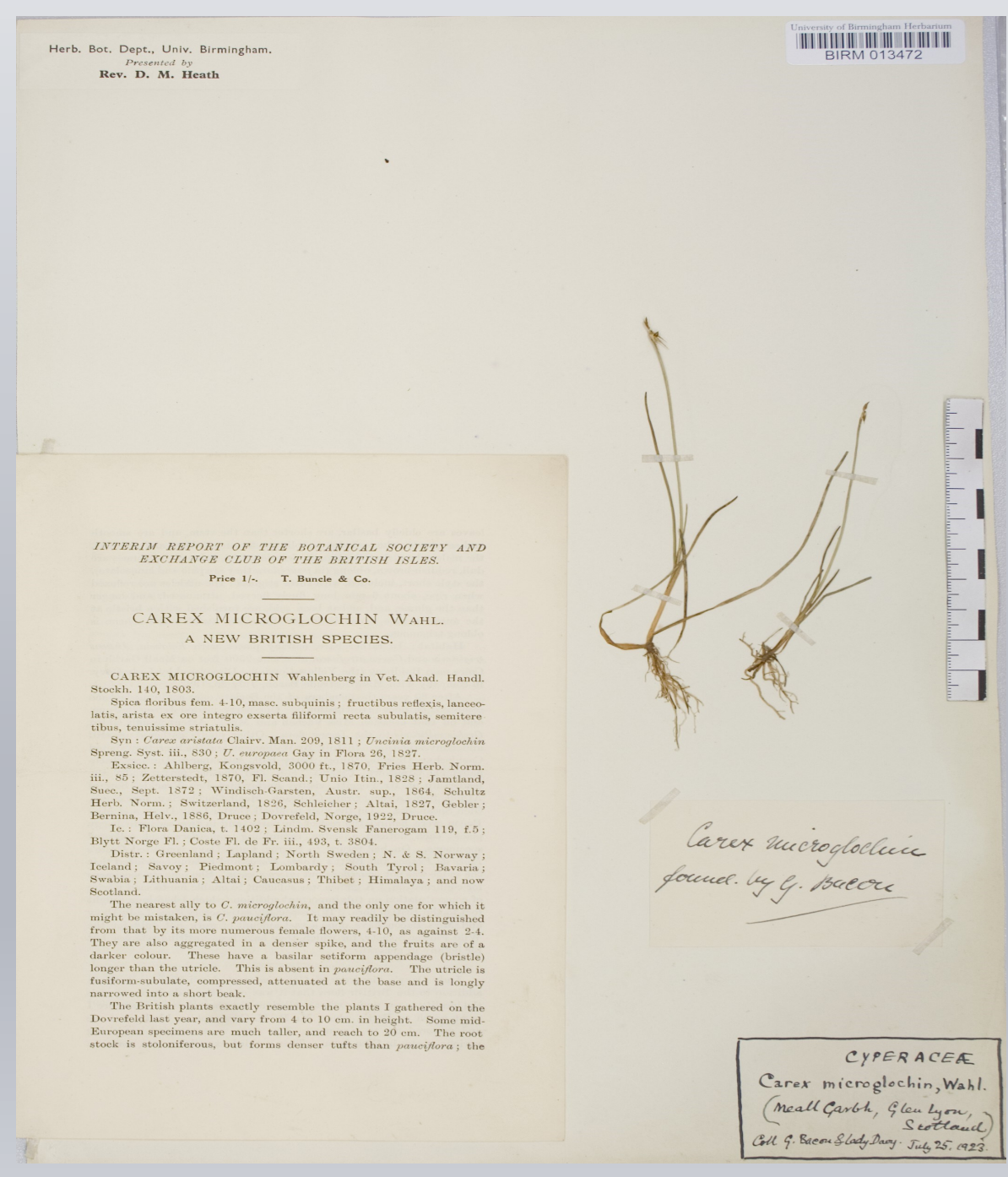
The participation of women in botany has increased steadily since the 19th century, but, even in the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland there are still only about 40% female mem-

bers. Women are still in the minority in the society's governance and among vice county recorders.

Promoting gender equality in science is a slow process requiring both men and women to change their perceptions of science and scientists. There are several initiatives to promote gender equality in science. For example, the STEMettes (www.stemettes.org) aim to inspire females into Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. There are many other organisations supporting and promoting women in science; a comprehensive list can be found on the WISE Campaign website:

<https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/resources/2015/04/women-in-stem-networks-organisations>.

Joanna Charlotte Davy &
Gertrude Bacon
Discoverers of
Carex microglochin

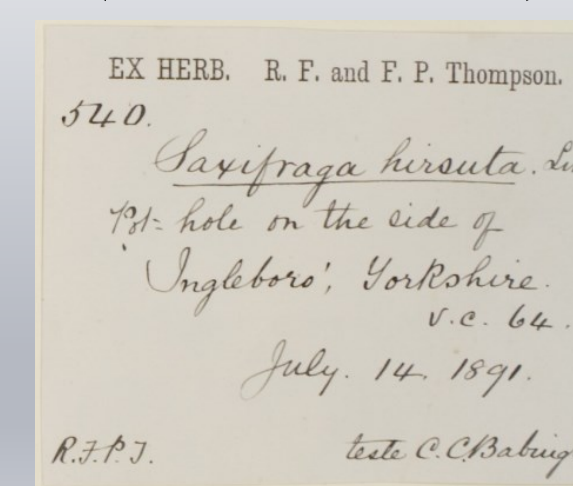


Eileen McCracken
(1920-1988)
Author and historian

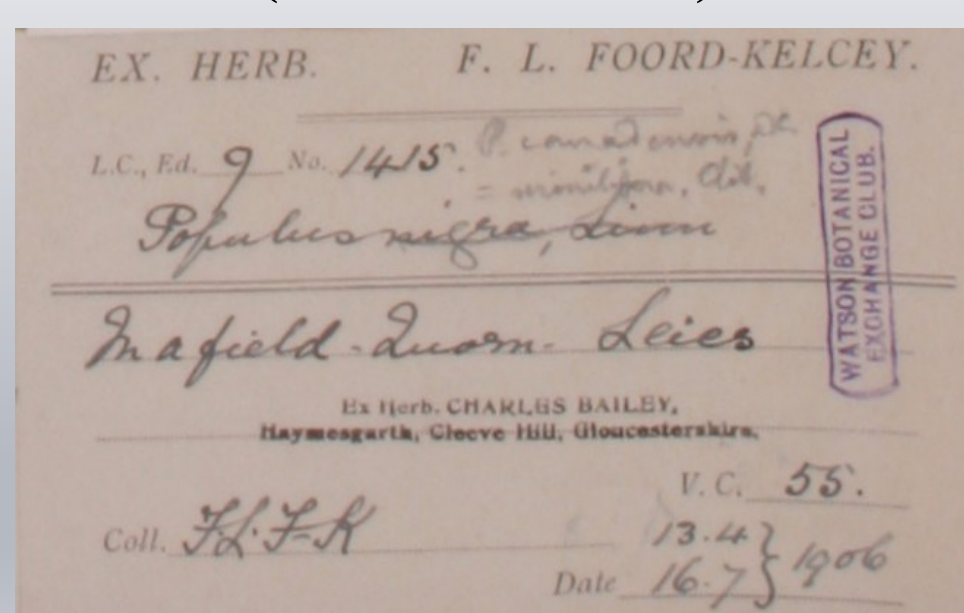
Anne Marie
Walker
(1778-1852)
Collector and
illustrator



Rachel Ford Thompson
(1856-1906)



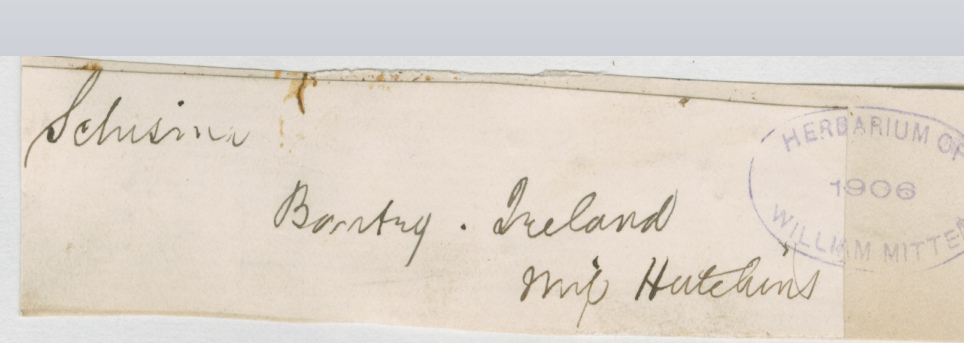
Frances Louisa Foord-Kelcey
(1862-1914)



Lydia Becker
(1827-1890)
Suffragist and
botanist

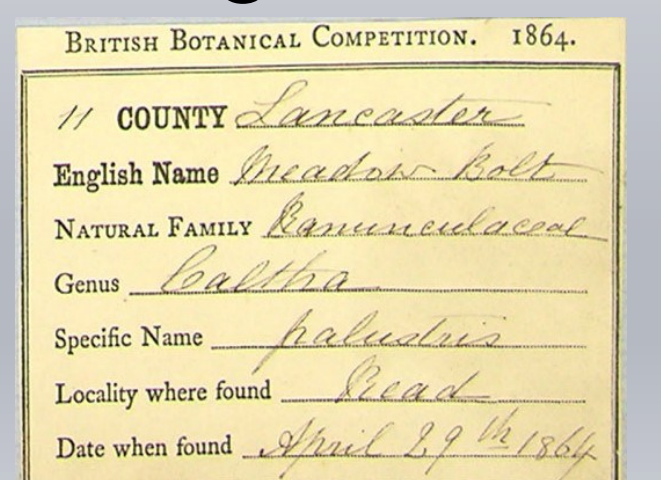


Ellen Hutchins (1785-1850)
“Ireland’s first female botanist”

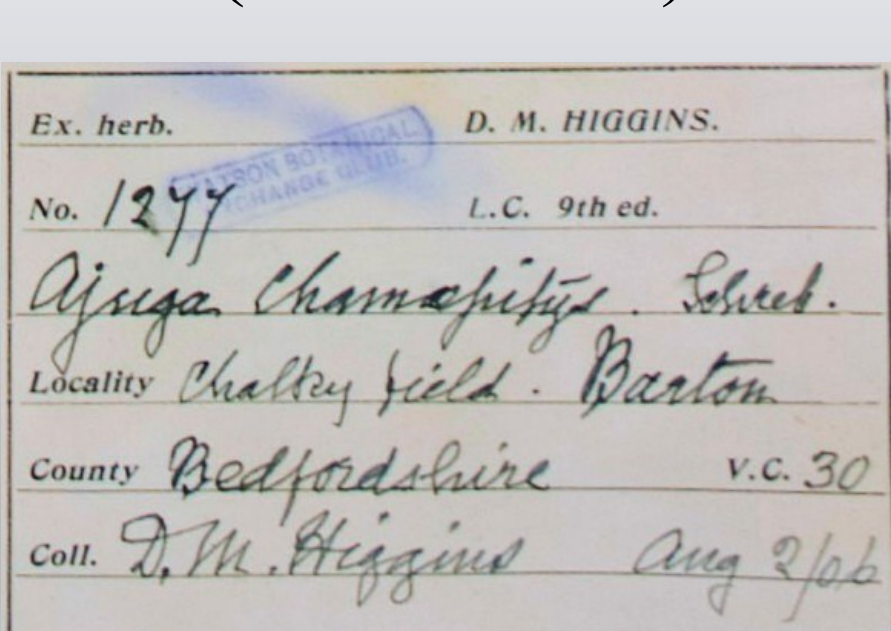


Gwendolen Day
(1884-1967)

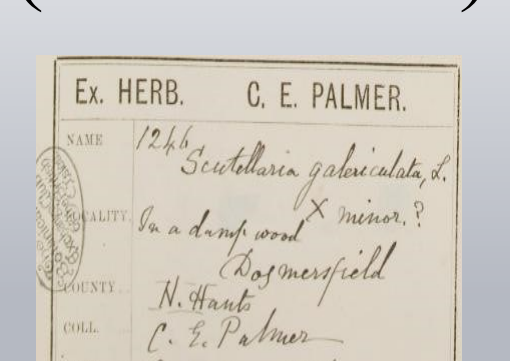
President of the Bedford
Natural History & Ar-
chaeological Society



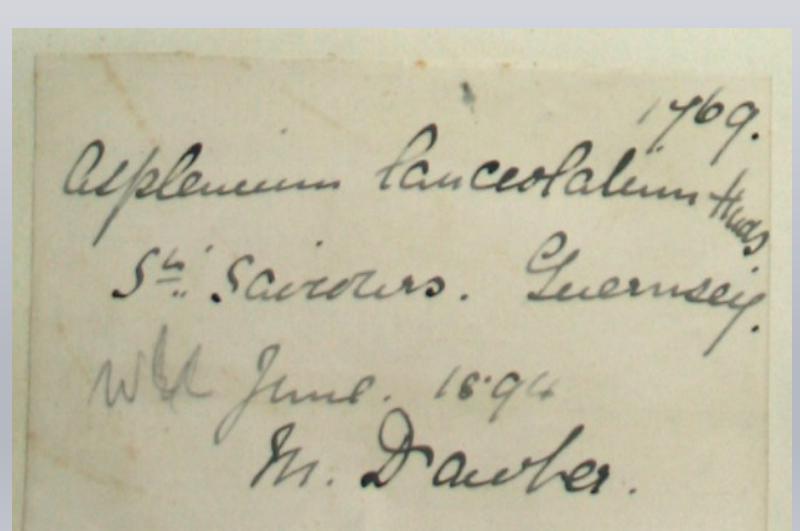
Dorcas Martha Higgins
(1856-1920)



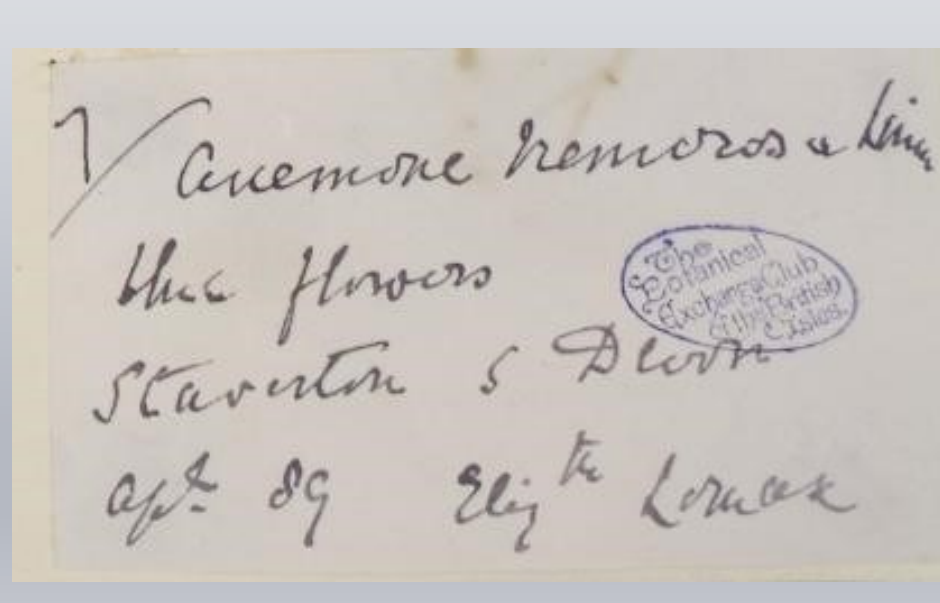
Charlotte Ellen Palmer
(1830-1914)



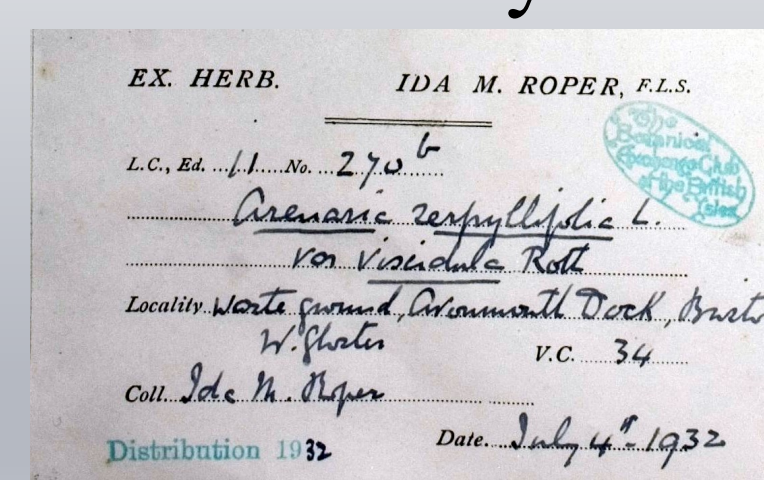
Margaret Dawber (1859-1901)
Collector in the
Channel Islands



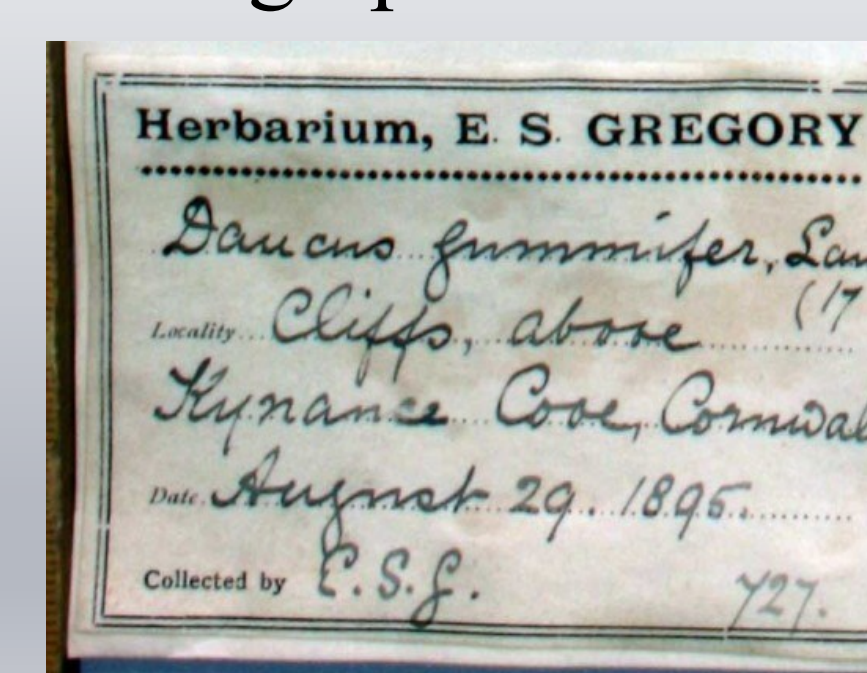
Elizabeth Anne Lomax
(1810-1895)



Ida Mary Roper (1865-1935)
President of Bristol Naturalists
Society



Eliza S. Gregory (1840-1832)
Monographer of Violets



Marjorie E. Bostock
(1885-1959)

