

Archives Research Guide: Sources for the History of Plant Hunters 18th to 20th Centuries.

This Guide provides a detailed list of sources in the Archives relating to the history of Plant Hunters, either having worked at Kew or whose papers were donated to the Archives.

Not all material has been catalogued; in this case, every effort has been made to give a general description of the collection, but only a closer perusal of the papers will reveal the extent of their usefulness.

To keep this guide to a reasonable size, the full list of catalogued collections has not been included; however, these can be obtained either on line through The National Archives Catalogue at

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/searchthearchives/catalogue.htm>

or can be sent as a Word list by mail or as an e-mail attachment upon request.

This guide is not comprehensive, as not all our collections have been catalogued; however, we will endeavour to update it as we progress with our cataloguing backlog.

A brief History of Plant Hunters

They were essentially Plant Pioneers who brought back species from far away shores and transformed gardens in Europe. Joseph Banks, who was Captain Cook's Botanist, turned plant hunting into a profession. In 1771, he brought back 1,300 new plant species from Botany Bay in Australia. Under George III, Banks carried out scientific research at Kew and set off plant hunters to the Americas, Africa, Australia and the South Seas bringing up more than 7,000 plant species as well as cash crops.

In the 19th Century, Sir William and Sir Joseph Hooker continued to promote plant discovery and also their redistribution to appropriate colonial Botanic Gardens. Plant hunting at Kew changed from 1841 under officially appointed Directors; Restrained by a limited budget, William Hooker relied on his network of international correspondents to obtain plants from the colonies. Sir Joseph himself, on an expedition to the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim, North East India, brought back 28 new species and started a passion for rhododendrons that lasted well into the next century.

Frank Kingdon-Ward whose journeys into Tibet, China and Burma spanned 45 years until the 1950s, was the longest serving and the last in a long line of plant pioneers. By the 1930s air travel and the changing attitude of host countries objecting to having plants taken away from their soil, changed plant hunting for ever.

There were also numerous individuals, male and female, who lived and travelled in remote parts of the British Empire in the 19th and early 20th Centuries, and collected plants for Kew free of charge. Thus, the archives contain collections relating to these individuals, or more often, plant lists and/or correspondence with the Directors and members of staff.

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Part 1: 18th Century

1/ Official Records

We have few documents relating to plant hunting activities either connected to Kew or happening elsewhere; our early records have not survived. However, we have a record of plants coming in and leaving Kew in our **Record Book 1793-1809** which gives details of plant collectors and localities, and also sometimes contain background information in the shape of notes or correspondence. This volume has been fully indexed by collector and place name.

2. Papers of Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) (JBK) - Catalogued

Although Joseph Banks was heavily involved in plant hunting activities at Kew, and especially with sending Plant Hunters from Kew in the 18th and early 19th Century, we have only a limited amount of correspondence held in series JBK/1/1. A full index of correspondents exists but is not included in the catalogue in detail apart from being listed as an index book.

3. Papers of Kew Collectors (KCL) 1791-1898 - Catalogued

The Kew Collectors Collection contains papers and correspondence from a number of botanists who were sent on collecting expeditions on behalf of Kew Gardens. The first series relates to a Collection of papers by a variety of botanists, subsequent series relate to papers of individual named botanists. Although the first date for documents within this collection starts in 1791, there is little for the 18th Century. Only a close perusal of the first series '*KCL/1 Various Collectors 1791-1865*' will reveal any relevant document relating to this period. This indexed series comprises two boxes of mounted papers and correspondence relating to the following botanists and plant Collectors:

Part 2: 19th and 20th Centuries

A/ Official Records

1. Kew Record Books 1800-1847 – Indexed.

These cover, similarly to the Record Book mentioned above, names of Collectors together with the plants they sent to Kew. They are indexed by name and/or locality/country. The Record Books cover the earlier 19th C period and mention plants going out of Kew as well; however, the difference between the two is recorded.

2. Kew Inwards/Outwards Book 1837-1843 – Indexed.

Similarly to the Record Books, this volume records both plants coming in and out but with the difference distinctively marked.

3. Kew Inwards Books 1805 - 1959 – Indexed.

These volumes record specifically plants coming into Kew with names of Collectors and localities. There is some overlap with the Kew Record Books above and the single volume recording both Inwards and Outwards plants also featured above.

4. Plant Determination Lists 1845-1918 – Indexed.

These are volumes containing lists of plants sent to Kew for determination or identification by its Botanists; some volumes include also correspondence. They are indexed by collector and locality/country. The later period consists of loose typescript pages in boxes arranged by geographical location. These have not however, been indexed.

5. Papers relating to Kew Collectors, (KCL) 1791-1898 - Catalogued

The Kew Collectors Collection contains papers and correspondence from a number of botanists who were sent on collecting expeditions on behalf of Kew Gardens. The first series relates to a Collection of papers by a variety of botanists, subsequent series relate to papers of individual named botanists. The Administrative history for this collection contains brief biographies of the plant collectors whose papers are contained within the collection. The majority of the documents contain administrative documents as well as plant collecting information. Most of the records consist of plant collecting journals, concerned with the flora encountered but also includes comments about people and places.

6. Director's Correspondence 1809-1928 – Indexed.

This collection consists of 218 volumes, from 1809 to 1928. This consists of official correspondence sent firstly to William Hooker himself whilst still in Glasgow (1809-1840) and later in his official capacity as Director of the Gardens (1841-1865); the later correspondence (post 1865), is addressed to subsequent Directors and senior staff at Kew. The volumes are arranged geographically and each letter has been individually indexed. They sometimes also contain sketches, maps, photographs, plant lists and plant samples.

7. Miscellaneous Reports 1850s-1970s – Part Indexed.

This is a large collection consisting of printed reports, newspaper cuttings, and correspondence bound into volumes, which are arranged in geographical order. Although the subject emphasis is on economic botany, and the work of Botanic stations in the former colonies, there is also some correspondence from plant collectors with an emphasis mainly on economic botany, which has been indexed. The volumes are currently being catalogued in detail, starting with the Indian continent; as this project progresses, more documents relating to plant collecting and plant collectors may come to light.

B. Private/Working Papers

1: Papers relating to Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) (JBK) Botanist - Catalogued

Although Joseph Banks was heavily involved in plant hunting activities at Kew, and especially with sending Plant Hunters from Kew in the 18th and early 19th Century, we have only a limited amount of correspondence held series JBK/1/1. A full index of correspondents exists but is not included in the catalogue. There is also some correspondence from and to Banks in the Kew Collectors in the KCL Kew Collectors collection.

2. Papers of William Burchell (1781 – 1863) (WJB) - Catalogued

William Burchell first worked at Kew and in 1805 left for St Helena where he later became Superintendent of the Botanic Gardens and surveyed the island's natural resources. In 1815 he was appointed botanist in Cape Colony in South Africa; he travelled locally for seven months. In June 1811 he set off on a major expedition into Cape Colony and Bechuanaland which lasted four years and covered 4500 miles. Burchell brought to England some 63,000 specimens of plants, seeds, insects, fish and animal skins and skeletons, which he had collected on his travels. This has been described as the largest collection made by one man ever to leave Africa. He had also made 500 field sketches and botanical, zoological and ethnographic drawings and kept detailed notes of his travels and observations of natural history. In 1825 Burchell joined a British diplomatic mission to Brazil where he travelled and collected plants in remote regions for five years.

This collection consists of four series, the first (WJB/1) covering plant collecting activities in St Helena, the second (WJB/2) consists of nine volumes on the flora of Africa, the third (WJB/3) consists of six volumes relating to the Flora of Portugal, Madeira, Tenerife and

Brazil and the fourth 'Memorandum' is made up of two volumes of plant lists, documentation of the labelling and packaging of collected plants, descriptions of the conditions of specimens, details of bulb planting and discussions and correspondence relating to the herbariums.

3. Papers of Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911) (JDH) – Catalogued.

Plant hunting records are mainly for the period 1839 to 1851; first on board HMS *Erebus* from 1839 to 1843, which took Hooker through Cape of Good Hope, Kerguelen Island, Tasmania, Auckland Islands, Campbell Island, Victoria Barrier, Sydney, New Zealand, Cape Horn, Falkland Islands and Hermite Island off Tierra del Fuego. They cover also for the later period (1847–1851). During his travels in the central and eastern Himalaya, India, Sikkim and Nepal.

The first series entitled 'Expeditions' (JDH/1) will be the richest in terms of plant collecting activities; however, other series such as 'Correspondence' (JDH/2), also the third series 'Publications & Botanical Manuscripts' relating to the published works of J.D. Hooker and other manuscript Flora (JDH/3) and perhaps the fourth series 'Miscellaneous Papers' will also contain relevant material such as it contains amongst other various documents manuscripts relating to plants observed on expeditions, notably India.

4. Papers of Richard Spruce (1817-1893) (RSP) – Catalogued.

Spruce undertook the exploration of the Amazon Valley, leaving England in 1847, which would last for fifteen years. The first series (RSP/1) contains manuscript volumes compiled on various expeditions undertaken by Spruce including journals and botanical notes. The volumes are primarily concerned with his Amazonian expedition but also cover his time in the Pyrenees and Yorkshire. The second series (RSP/2) contains volumes of original letters both to and from Spruce. Correspondents include George Bentham and William Hooker. One volume also includes notes on the introduction of Cinchona to India and other botanical matters. The contents of some of the letters will contain information on his travels and plant collecting activities.

5. Papers of Augustine Henry (1857-1930) (AUH) Catalogued.

Henry started collected plants at Ichang in China in 1882. The area immediately surrounding the town is plains while only a few miles were the San Xia, a hundred miles of gorges filled with vegetation. He sent his first collection of around 1000 specimens to Kew in November that year. Henry continued to send specimens to Kew throughout his time in China and corresponded regularly with the director of the time, Mr Thiselton-Dyer. In 1888, he arranged special leave from his post of medical officer to go plant collecting on behalf of Kew.

During this leave, Henry made two long journeys, one to the mountains southwest of the Yangtze and the other to the mountains in the north in the Hubei district. The main objective of these expeditions was to study the vegetables used in Chinese medicine. In addition to this, Henry also found many plants that were not known to grow in China. The areas he travelled were largely unknown to botanists and in some areas he was the first western man to travel there. . In addition to these trips, Henry also was the first to employ native people as collectors on his behalf when he was not able to leave Ichang. They collected the some of the specimens that Henry sent to Kew. He later collected on the island of Huinan.

The Archives do not hold a large amount of documents relating to Augustine Henry as most of his papers are held elsewhere. However, of interest are a volume of correspondence from Henry to H. B. Morse over the period 1893-1909 (AUH/2/1) and also series three (AHU/3)

consisting of three volumes of lists of plants collected by Augustine Henry in China during his time there.

6. Papers of Arthur Kerr (1877-1942) – Box List.

He started his career in Siam (Thailand) as a Medical Officer in the early 1900s. While there, he began collecting and drawing orchids. In 1908 while on leave in Europe, he came to Kew and Sir David Prain, the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, and Dr. O. Stapf, Keeper of the Herbarium, urged him to collect a variety of plants and gave him the necessary equipment. In 1915 he left Bangkok for Europe; in 1919 he arrived back in Bangkok via Hong Kong, having served as a surgeon on a troop ship; from 1920 - 1932 he was Director of the Botanical Section of the Ministry of Commerce of Siam. Each year from 1920 until 1929 he went on a botanical tour beginning in the north of Siam and working his way southwards. He took a special interest in plants of economic importance. In November 1920: he returned to his old residence in Chiangmai. After the death of his wife in 1921 of malaria; He and his brother took his four daughters back to England where they were taken care of by an aunt, On 11th March 1922; he returned to Chiangmai alone. He was in Thailand for another ten years before returning to England.

His papers consist of a variety of material. Although not catalogued a good box list exists enabling the finding of specific documents. The collection includes diaries (medical and botanical); photographs, plant tag books, plant lists, botanical notes on orchids and other plants as well as notebooks, miscellaneous notes, botanical slips, medicinal plants notes, correspondence and publications (33 volumes); photographic slides and photographs.

7. Papers of Frank Kingdon-Ward (1885-1958) (FKW) Catalogued.

He first started as a teacher in 1909 in Shanghai, and soon gave it up for a full time career as botanist and explorer. In 1910, he joined an American zoological expedition which was to travel six hundred miles in central and western China, up the Yangtze to Wuhan, and then to Tibet. Because of the financial backing provided by the Duke of Bedford, the expedition became known as the 'Bedford Expedition', with the aim to collect animal specimen. Although inexperienced, Kingdon-Ward made himself useful and collected a small collection of plants which he later presented to the Botany School at Cambridge. In 1911, having gained enough experience, he set off on his first solo expedition, the first of many, the mountains of Yunnan and in the wild Tibetan marshes. This expedition was funded by Arthur Bulley, a sea merchant. Most of the following of Kingdon-Ward's expeditions were funded in some way by private individuals and sometimes the equipment was provided free of charge from organisations such the Royal Geographical Society.

His papers consist of a variety of material. The first series consists of thirty diaries, covering the period 1924-1957, written during Kingdon-Ward's expeditions in South East Asia. As well as detailed notes of plants collected, they comprise other notes taken during expeditions. These include observations on the landscape, the weather and the wildlife; they also include notes about his contact with local inhabitants. The second series consists mainly of correspondence covering the period 1891- 1987 to and from Kingdon-Ward, some botanical, others of a more personal nature. It also includes various photographs of family and friends and a few of Kingdon-Ward himself. Some files also include press cuttings mostly of articles written by him.

The third series comprises photographs and slides of South East Asia covering the period and Britain. Of particular interest is a box of nine glass negatives of an expedition in Burma in 1953 which have been printed in black and white prints.

8/ Papers of Colin Graham Trapnell (1907-2004) (CGT) OBE Catalogued.

Trapnell obtained a post as Government Ecologist at the Colonial Office in the late 1920s and in 1931 was posted to Rhodesia, now Zambia. His task was to reconnoitre and map soils, vegetation types as well as indigenous agriculture of the whole territory, a task that would take him 10 years. The task was generally carried out on foot, as there were in those days few tracks suitable for motor vehicles. Trapnell and his colleagues would depart for six months at a time, using native bearers carrying essentials such as medical supplies and food. For many of the native tribes they encountered, this was to be their first sighting of white men. The surveys, the first of their kind to cover a whole African country, were published after the Second World War and have recently been republished (2004) as they are still the basic source of essential natural resource data for the country '*The Soils, Vegetation and Traditional Agriculture of Zambia*' is in two volumes with accompanying maps. In the 1950s he was asked to train ecologists for work in Africa, ranging from large scale vegetation and soil surveys to investigations into Tsetse and desert locusts infestation. In the 1960s, his work concentrated more on African agriculture, he was also asked by the Kenya Department of Agriculture asked him to prepare an overall vegetation map covering 40,000 square miles of southwest Kenya. This major undertaking was not completed for several years after his retirement. Thus, in the 1960s, he was engaged in the completion of the interpretation of air photographs for the vegetation and climate maps of South West Kenya, the sheets of which were published successively by the Directorate of Overseas Surveys between 1966 and 1986. In the last three years of his life, although aged over 90, he collaborated with Paul Smith at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew to produce a three volume ecological survey of Zambia.

This collection consists of four series comprising in the first Trapnell's collecting Notebooks in Zambia; in the second a file of correspondence sent and received by Trapnell, mostly relating to his work; the third includes notes, reports and surveys on a variety of topics and the fourth and final series contains photographs of Zambia, Kenya and Malawi recording the work carried out by Trapnell, and showing vegetation, agricultural practices and also native people and habitations.

9/ Papers of Norman Douglas Simpson (1890-1974) - (SIM) Catalogued.

After graduating from Cambridge in Natural Sciences in 1911, Simpson failed to obtain a post at Kew. However, Assistant Director A W Hill suggested he might undertake the identification of specimens collected the previous year in North-Western Mongolia and Chinese Dzungaria by Morgan Philips Price (c.1885-1973). In November 1911 Morgan agreed to pay Simpson 30/- a week for six months to identify and list his plants with a view to publication. Simpson worked on this with the help of Otto Stapf (c.1857-1933) until 1912 and it also led him into studying the genus *Astragalus*. Simpson's resulting enumeration was submitted to the Linnean Society by Stapf and was published in October 1913 and included new species. He later gained a further qualification in Agricultural studies, and the rest of his career concentrated mainly on economic botany and agricultural crops which took him to the Middle East and Ceylon up to the 1970s. He continued however, to collect plants in the countries where he was working, and on his death his Herbarium included 5,800 sheets from Egypt, 1,580 from the Sudan, 400 from Jordan, 600 from Morocco, 800 from Algeria, 500 from Tunisia, 600 from Cirenaica, 18,100 of British and Irish plants and 1,300 of Continental

European plants which he collected from 1903-1973. The Sudan, Egypt and Jordan collections were deposited to The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the rest to the Natural History Museum.

Of particular interest on the plant collecting side, will be the two series consisting of correspondence (SIM/1 & 2) as well as some of his collecting notebooks (SIM/3) and some of his index cards arranged geographically or by genus and plant names (SIM/5).

10. African Expeditions (1840-1893)

This collection consists of four volumes or series relating to four different expeditions into Africa in the 19th century and contains mainly correspondence and some other papers relating to plant collecting activities in Africa. The first is 'West Africa Niger Expedition' c. 1840-1886 (AEX1/1), and is a collection of notes and correspondence relating to this expedition, led by William Balfour Baikie (1825-1864) up the rivers Kwora and Binue in Niger in 1854. The second volume relates to the 'Zambesi Expedition' 1859-1883 (AEX/2/1) which was headed by Sir David Livingstone with Sir John Kirk as the Naturalist on the expedition and Thomas Baines as Store Keeper and Artist. This volume comprises correspondence, notes and press cuttings relating to the expedition. The third volume 'East Africa – Kilimanjaro Expedition' 1881-1890 (AEX/3/1) which was organised and led by the Royal Geographical Society and had Joseph Thomson as its botanist; the volume consists of correspondence, printed minutes from the Council of the British Association, maps, printed reports and press cuttings. The fourth volume 'Sierra Leone, Boundary Commission' 1890-1893 (AEX4/1), consists of correspondence, press cuttings and in an in depth printed 'colonies Report' presented to Parliament. The Sierra Leone Boundary Commission aim was to determine the frontier between French and English Territory. A Government Grant made to the Royal Society enabled for a Botanist to accompany the expedition, G H Scott Elliot, under instructions from William Thiselton-Dyer, Director of the Gardens at Kew.

11. Other Papers of Collectors.

The list above is far from exhaustive. We have numerous other papers of people who collected plants, but these have not been catalogued, although some lists exist. Contact the Archives for more information.

C/ Correspondence contained within other Collections

There are numerous other collectors, whose paper are not held at Kew, but who corresponded with Kew. The majority of these have been indexed. If names and dates are provided, the Archives will search the finding aids for relevant material. The majority is held in the Directors' Correspondence, covering the early 19th Century until 1928; this correspondence was addressed to Sir William Hooker in the first instance, Director at Kew from 1841-1865, although his earlier correspondence has also been incorporated within this collection. Correspondence for the later period (post 1865) is addressed to other Directors and senior staff. For the later part of the 20th Century, some correspondence may be held in old Registered files; some are featured on the Library Catalogue. For more information on this, please contact the Archives.

D/ Individual Items and Small Collections

The archives also hold small collections and individual items relating to little known plant collectors. These are usually listed on the Archives database by name, geographical area and date of origin.

E/ Registered Files

Registered files consist mainly of official correspondence and other papers, plant lists among others, and have a very specific title, which can often be the name of the individual concerned. There are numerous registered files for the period 1930-1950s, concerning either specific plant collectors or particular geographical areas. Many are featured on the Library catalogue but this list can only be viewed when searched internally.

F/ Women Plant Collectors

1/ Papers of Marian Muriel Whiting (1881-1978). *Uncatalogued.*

She travelled the world in the 1920s and 1930s and collected plants she sent to Kew. She sent to Kew 590 specimen from China, Japan, the Philippines, Hawaii, Morocco and Prince Edward Islands in Canada. Her papers contain letters, plant lists and collecting notebooks, one especially with sketches for Canton, indexed by plants with maps.

2/ Plant Collecting notebooks of Cecil Ivry Sandwith (1871-1961) - *Uncatalogued.*

She collected plants in Chilanga District, Northern Rhodesia. Her papers consist of 3 notebooks, the first is a notebook on the vegetation of Sharpham Plot, Glastonbury (1928-1929) the second and third notebooks are notes on grasses collected in South Africa and Rhodesia. See also Registered file PRO 4/S/10 (1929-1951) for correspondence.

3/ Plant Collecting notebooks of Mary Archbold (-1992) - *Uncatalogued.*

Mary E. Archbold worked for the church in Tanzania for most of her life, joining the UMCA Mission to Africa in 1936; she taught at many church schools & missions and ran the Lay Training Centre in Korogwe; a respected botanist, Mary Archbold collected local plants to send to RBG Kew, and contributed several species to the Flora of East Tropical Africa. Her notebooks (1980-1988) lists specimens collected, and are annotated. See also Registered file QG 2698 for correspondence.

4/ Letters in the Director's Correspondence and within other Correspondence 19th C-early 20th C.

There are numerous letters from Ladies' plant collectors in the Director's Correspondence (1809-1928) and also possibly in other correspondence. The names have been indexed up to 1928. See also D/ above, 'Individual Items and Small Collections'.