

Two Victorian Botanists: Professor Roger Hennedy and Professor George Francis Scott Elliot

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INTRODUCTION

Professor Blodwen Lloyd Binns, to whom the Society is indebted for her very generous bequest, rediscovered the long lost herbarium of the then Royal Technical College in the early 1950s. During the years 1954 to 1962 she compiled a meticulous catalogue, since used as the primary source for data entry into a computerised database (Macpherson, P. & Watson, K., 1996). She published an account of the herbarium - which is now held in the safe keeping of the City at the Museums Resource Centre - in the *Glasgow Naturalist* (Lloyd, B., 1964). In this she noted that three of her predecessors at the College (now the University of Strathclyde) had made major contributions: John Scouler, Roger Hennedy and George Francis Scott Elliot. She recorded a brief account of Scouler's life in the *Glasgow Naturalist* (Lloyd, B., 1961), and hoped to be able make a more detailed study of him. She also wished to publish a record of the careers of Hennedy and Scott Elliot, although time proved to be against her. When making her bequest she suggested that it would be appropriate to record their lives in the *Glasgow Naturalist*.^{*} Various notes made by her have been useful in helping to provide the following account of their lives and achievements. An account of her own life is recorded in the *Glasgow Naturalist* (Macpherson, P., 1992).

Hennedy and Scott Elliot both made significant contributions to our knowledge of the Scottish flora, and both were active members of forerunners of the Glasgow Natural History Society. Their careers spanned the Victorian Age but Hennedy was born in Georgian times and Scott Elliot lived well into the 20th Century. Hennedy spent most of his life in Glasgow but Scott Elliot was only here for about six years and his most noteworthy work was exploring and studying the flora of Africa. They never met and came from very different backgrounds.

^{*}It was a pleasure to me to be asked to write this paper as I had one of those "small world" coincidences involving Professor Lloyd Binns. My father, while stationed at the R.N.A.S airship station on Anglesey during World War I, became a close friend of Siân Williams who was later to become the daughter-in-law and confidant of John Lloyd Williams, Professor of Botany; the much-admired lecturer of Professor Lloyd Binns. In later years I was able to bring the two together. Although they never met, they established a close friendship by telephone, and had

long and vigorous conversations which added pleasure to their last years.

ROGER HENNEDY (1809 – 1876)

Professor Hennedy (Fig. 1) is well known as the author of *The Clydesdale Flora* (Hennedy, 1865). This ran to five editions, two of which were published after his death. The final edition was a revision by Professor Thomas King, a successor of Hennedy, (Hennedy & King, 1891) and it was only superseded by the publication of Lee's "Flora" in 1933 (Lee, 1933). It had thus proved its value as the standard local flora for nearly 70 years; a period of greatly increased popular interest in nature studies.



ROGER HENNEDY,
PROFESSOR OF BOTANY,
ANDERSONIAN UNIVERSITY, GLASGOW,
BY W^F SIMPSON.

Fig. 1. Roger Hennedy Professor of Botany Andersonian University, Glasgow, 1863 – 1876 by William Simpson.

Roger Hennedy was born in 1809 at Carrickfergus, near Belfast, of Scottish parentage. His family had changed the initial letter of their surname from K to H. This may

sound more Irish but it is strange as Kennedy had been quite a common name there since the 'plantations' of Lowland Scots to Ulster, initiated in the reign of King James VI.

Hennedy followed an unusual career path for a professor of Botany. His life is traced by his friend William 'Crimea' Simpson, the famous war artist, in a biographical note published in an 'In Memoriam' edition of his *Clydesdale Flora* (Hennedy, 1878).

From the age of two he lived with his grandfather, who ran a local store, and as he grew up Roger helped him. After his grandfather's death he became apprenticed as a block cutter to a local calico printer. However, finding his master 'tyrannical' he ran away to Scotland where he completed his apprenticeship with a Rutherglen firm of calico printers. In 1832 he left to join the Customs in Liverpool, but finding this uncongenial he soon returned and joined a firm of muslin printers, again as a block cutter.

By this time, however, lithography was replacing the block cutting method of printing in the textile industry and he adapted to the change. He became very skilled at the new process and he designed new patterns, mainly of floral designs, which he then transferred to the stone. His developing skill in drawing led to a closer interest in plants, and in 1838 "owing to a lull in his work, he went to Millport, Isle of Cumbrae and took up the study of Botany merely to pass away the time". It was here that he also developed a special interest in diatoms, for which he was to become a recognised authority. However, he continued his career as a designer of muslin patterns, working for two other firms before setting himself up with a partner in manufacturing sewed muslins. His botanical interest consumed all his spare time, and in 1848, following the founding of the Athenaeum, he started to teach a small botanical evening class. A year later he also started lecturing at the Mechanics' Institute.

On 2 July 1851 the Natural History Society of Glasgow was formed by nine "gentlemen interested in the pursuit of natural science" and Roger Hennedy joined them a few days later when John Scouler addressed them and was elected their first Honorary President (Sutcliffe, 2001). Scouler had been a Professor in Dublin since 1834, having previously been Professor of Natural History at Anderson's University. Hennedy, however, still continued in the muslin trade. According to the Post Office Directories (which are not always reliable) he set up his own business as a sewed muslin manufacturer in Queen Street in 1856 and this continued until 1871. Meantime in 1863 he was appointed Professor of Botany at the then Andersonian University, a post he held until his death in 1876.

William 'Crimea' Simpson attended his first classes at the Athenaeum and they became firm friends. They went on excursions together, Hennedy botanising and Simpson sketching. They both got to know Hugh MacDonald, author of *Rambles Around Glasgow* (MacDonald, 1854),

who, like Hennedy, had been apprenticed as a block cutter to a calico printer.

In MacDonald's book there are references to the two of them, although not by name (*vide* Simpson, 1903), on an excursion to Robroyston and Chryston, when Simpson was on a return visit to Glasgow. "Our flower-loving friend is now in all his glory poking and prying along the vegetable fringe that skirts the path. Every now and then we are startled by his exclamations of delight, as some specimen of more than ordinary beauty meets his gaze". MacDonald stresses the breadth of Hennedy's natural history interests, and ends in his inimitable melodramatic Victorian style when Hennedy picks up a toad: "Of course, we shrink back in disgust, but that won't satisfy our philosophical friend who talks contemptuously of ignorant prejudice [and gives] an account of the monster's habits and mode of living" before letting "the loathsome creature crawl away". Meanwhile "Our artistic companion ... set himself down ... to transfer a *fac-simile* ... into his sketch book". The book includes a copy of the sketch Simpson had made of Cardarroch House on this outing.

Simpson corresponded with both Hennedy and MacDonald from the front during the Crimean War, and Hennedy's herbarium includes a specimen of a *Linum* sp. collected on 13 December 1854 from "The Valley of the Shadow of Death" (*vide*: The Charge of the Light Brigade).

Hennedy also became closely associated with Walker Arnot (Regius Professor of Botany, University of Glasgow). They conducted a scientific correspondence for over 20 years and also went on excursions together, Hennedy then especially collecting diatoms. On one occasion they were near a group of colliers who were puzzled by their antics. Hennedy overheard one of them saying of him: "that wee ane's daft, he's clean gyte; see, he's gathering glaur and pittin'd in a bottle".

His interest in diatoms is commemorated in *Navicula hennedyi* W. Smith, and *Toxarium hennedyanum* (Gregory) Pelletan. The eminent phycologist William Henry Harvey named an Australian genus of Rhodophyta (Red Algae) in his name - *Hennedya crispa* Harvey & Arnot - as well as a species first found off the Isle of Cumbrae - *Actinococcus hennedyi* Harvey, the valid name of which is now said to be *Haemescharia hennedyi* (Harvey) Vinogradova & Yacovleva.

An interest in mosses also brought him a commemorative generic name: *Hennediella* J.N.Paris. This genus is found mainly in North America, but as an alien elsewhere, including the British Isles. It has recently been recognised as a more important genus than originally thought. It is even referred to in *A Short History of Nearly Everything* (Bryson, 2003) and a revision has been published listing 15 species (Cano, 2008).

Hennedy recounted to Simpson how he collected a large specimen of Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) one Sunday morning, at a time when the Sabbath was strictly

observed. With bad timing he found himself walking through a village as the 'Established' Kirk was 'skailing' and he passed a long procession of serious faces. To his even greater embarrassment he then passed the Free Kirk as the congregation was coming out and he was mortified when they showed their astonishment at seeing him walking along with his copious plant on such a day!

Simpson records that Hennedy was of a rather solitary nature, and spent his time studying alone well into the night. He had little regard for money and often gave his time freely to his students. His wife, Margaret, the daughter of David Cross of Rutherglen, is recorded as: "a lady whose energy and industry in relation to her husband's work deserves better mention than can possibly be given..." (Simpson in Hennedy, 1878).

The family lived at Grafton Place, close to the College, and the 1861 Census Returns show they have five grown up children living with them. Three girls and one son, William, are recorded as working with their father as "sewed muslin manufacturers". William appears to have had some botanical interest as the herbarium includes three of the rarer alpine plants on Ben Lawers and a specimen of the Fortingall Yew collected by him. Their second son, David, a salesman, is recorded in the Post Office Directories from 1869 as D. Hennedy & Co., with the same business address, in Queen Street, as his father. By the 1871 Census, when Roger Hennedy is a Professor of Botany, the other children have left home. Shortly after this they moved to Whitehall, Bothwell and, according to the Post Office records, son David continued to live there until 1891. Roger Hennedy died in 1876 at his home in Bothwell.

The accompanying sketch of Hennedy is by Simpson, who explained how it was made: "He would never have allowed a portrait of himself to be done. I chanced to be on a visit only a few weeks before his death. ... As the family were anxious to have some resemblance of him, I made notes of his face, without his knowledge, ... and have been able from them to make something of a likeness". In 1886 it was "decided a memorial for the late Mr. Hennedy should take the form of a marble bust to be placed in Anderson's College" (Proc. Nat. Hist. Soc. Glasgow 1886). Although this was done, its present whereabouts is not known. However, Simpson also made an oil painting from the sketch, and this is held in the Collins Gallery.

GEORGE FRANCIS SCOTT ELLIOT (1862 – 1934)

Scott Elliot (Fig. 2) was born in Calcutta in 1862 where his father, a member of a distinguished Borders family, was a merchant. His mother belonged to the Huguenot family of Durand.

He went to Cambridge in 1879 where he obtained a B.A. (mathematical tripos). After this he studied for his B.Sc. in Edinburgh, where he then assisted Professor Dickson (formerly Regius Professor of Botany, Glasgow), in conducting a practical class in botany.



Fig. 2. George Francis Scott Elliot Lecturer in Botany Glasgow & West of Scotland Technical College 1896 – 1903.

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However, he was to become a very widely travelled botanist and a prolific writer. "Wanderlust was one of our friend's marked attributes. It soon became most insistent. He left Edinburgh to visit the Canary Isles" (North Western Naturalist, 1934). His first major expedition was to South Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius in 1888-89. He had spent about 10 months botanising in South Africa when in December "I happened to be in Port Elizabeth. A ship was sailing for Madagascar and I yielded to an irresistible longing to go there". (Scott Elliot Family Papers). His Madagascar plant collection proved to be of special interest and is reported in a paper read to the Linnean Society on 5 June 1890 (Scott Elliot, 1890a). Several species were named after him, including five orchids by the specialist at Kew, R. A. Rolfe (Scott Elliot Family Papers). He himself named two new genera which remain mono-specific: *Leucosalpa*

madagascariensis (Scrophulariaceae) and *Camarotea souiensis* (Acanthaceae). Although he travelled quite widely in the island his collections were mainly from the south-east, in the Fort Dauphin area.

He followed this up with a plant collecting expedition to Libya and Egypt, before being appointed botanist to the Franco-British Delineation Commission (1892-1893) charting the frontier of Sierra Leone. Again he discovered many new plant species. An account of these was given by him at a meeting of the Linnean Society on 16 March 1893 (Scott Elliot, 1895a). He introduced his paper by commenting: "The results have been, to me at least, most disappointing". He felt that 5½ months "of which 30 days were rendered blank through fever and weakness" was far too short when compared with the years spent by other botanists. He would evidently have preferred to be a pioneer as he complained of "the extremely thorough way in which the flora had been already studied".

Despite this, he managed to bring home about 1170 specimens, including 50 or 60 new species, which are described in his paper. He acknowledges "the kindest and most unremitting assistance [from many of the botanists] at Kew ... and the British Museum ... I have to thank these gentlemen for the descriptions which they have kindly given for insertion in this paper". There are detailed descriptions in Latin of the new species; many of them are his own. Although a good number of these names are descriptive, some are commemorative. He acknowledges one of those earlier pioneers, the Swedish botanist Adam Afzelius, with *Uvaria afzelii* S. Elliot (Anonaceae). The Kew botanist W.P. Hiern named *Mara elliotii* (Ebenaceae) in his honour - a compliment he returned with *Ixora hiernii* S. Elliot (Rubiaceae). Similarly *Jasminum bakeri* S. Elliot was a compliment to another Kew botanist, specialising in Malvaceae, who had named *Hibiscus scotellii* E.G. Baker. C.B. Clarke and A.B. Rendle, both at Kew, named *Commelina elliotii*, and a grass was named by Rendle as *Eragrostis scotelliana*. At least his achievements had brought him more permanent botanical recognition!

Scott Elliot's most significant expedition was to East Africa exploring the Ruwenzori Mountains, Lake Tanganyika and down to the Zambesi. He had received a grant from the Royal Geographical Society and reported his experiences to a meeting of the Society on 8 April 1895 (Scott Elliot, 1895b). This was attended by geographical luminaries of the time and Henry Morton Stanley gave a lengthy critique. There was some geographical disagreement, but in mitigation, Stanley said: "I see the two best qualities of the explorer exhibited - first, the nosing quality, untiring inquisitiveness, a desire to know; and secondly, the quality of perseverance". Professor John Walker Gregory (*vide* the Gregory Building, University of Glasgow) emphasised the importance of the geological specimens which he had collected and congratulated him on his brilliant contribution to the geography of Equatorial Africa.

His exploration of the mountain mass of the Ruwenzori - which lies in western Uganda and partly in what is today the Democratic Republic of Congo - proved to be most significant. Although named by Pliny the "Mountains of the Moon" they had been little explored and the flora was until then virtually unknown.

As he neared the Ruwenzori on 29 March 1894: "I was prostrated on the march by a severe fever ... and was carried down to the shore of the Albert Edward. [Now called Lake Edward, it had been discovered by Stanley six years before and named by him after the then Prince of Wales]. That afternoon I had the most exquisite view of Ruwenzori which I ever had, and I really think the finest landscape I have ever seen. ... the sharp and jagged ridges of the mountains with a few glittering peaks of snow were clearly outlined against the bright sunset sky". The next night he noted extraordinary swarms of mosquitoes and a rhythmical chorus of frogs, but more serious was the presence of numerous leopards. Two of his porters were severely wounded: "I had to sew up their wounds by candlelight with an ordinary needle and thread".

He found that above about 5,400 feet the typical Ugandan flora (with elements of Congo and West African plants) gave way to plants also found on Mount Kilimanjaro and the Ethiopian mountains. "From 8,600 feet to 10,000 feet there is a zone of bamboos, particularly on the eastern side. Above this level there is a regular sphagnum peat-moss, in which one often sinks to the knees. Sometimes this is covered by a wood of stunted gnarled trees of heather festooned with grey lichens. In the more sheltered ravines one finds these growing to an enormous size, often with a diameter of 2 feet! There are also tree Senecios, tree Hypericums, the arborescent *Lobelia stuhlmanii*, which is 7 to 8 feet high, and quantities of brambles which are often as big as mulberries. ... Amongst the heather in the bare places, at about 10,000 feet, one finds an abundance of the delicate *Viola abyssinica*. There are also *Cerastium africanum*, Cardamines, Forget-me-nots, Epilobiums and a variety of beautiful orchids. Amongst these one finds quantities of little blue butterflies as well as Acraeas, and very numerous Bombylid flies and small Hymenoptera".

The whole expedition had proved to be a great success. He had discovered a large number of new species, including many endemics. In all he had collected 2700 herbarium specimens, as well as many insects, and other animal species, including a chameleon, later to be named *Chameleon elliotii* Gunth. A detailed account is given in his 413-page book *A Naturalist in Mid-Africa* (Scott Elliot, 1896a). The Scott Elliot Pass, reaching a height of 14,350 feet, is today a highlight of a seven-day adventure tour through these mountains.

In an article on *The Best Route to Uganda* (Scott Elliot, 1895c) he shows that he is a man of his period with ambitions for the British Empire. He is fearful that "our colonies in South Central Africa and East Africa will

be isolated for all time” and suggests that Germany (then moving into Tanganyika) would be willing to give a connecting route in exchange for land in the West African colonies. He later developed his imperialistic commercial views in a paper read to the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow: *The Prospect of Chinese Trade and Present Opportunities* (Scott Elliot, 1899). He claimed that “the best site for industrial enterprise in the world is the Yangtse Valley” and, although noting that “China is capable of becoming a serious trade rival”, he put forward an ambitious plan to encourage Germany to cut off Russian expansion into China from the north while Britain moved from the south to establish a trade monopoly in the Yangtse Valley.

Shortly after returning to Scotland, in April 1896, he married Annie Johnston-Stewart of Glasserton, near Whithorn. He was greatly devoted to her (Scott Elliot Family Papers) and she seems to have reduced his peripatetic habits. That year his *Flora of Dumfriesshire* (Scott Elliot, 1896b) was published in association with the Dumfries and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society which he had joined in 1887. This work is devoid of any description of the species, but it gives notes on localities - including some of the more notable plants from the adjoining counties - and who recorded them, including earlier records. There are also brief ecological notes and ‘dates of appearance’. There is a special emphasis on ‘insect visitors’. He notes: “catching insect visitors probably occupied more than 9/10^{ths} of the time I have spent on the work”. He acknowledges the help of Robert Service who also contributes information on the Hymenoptera of Mid-Solway. His interest in pollinating insects had already been shown by two papers on the fertilisation of the banana and *Strelizia* (Scott Elliot, 1890b), and of South African plants (Scott Elliot, 1891).

In 1896 he also had thoughts of settling down as a botany lecturer. His friend Patrick Geddes - who is best known as the ‘father’ of Town Planning - was Professor of Botany at Dundee and offered him a post, but as that would have involved very little lecturing he declined (Geddes Papers, 1896). Instead he took up an appointment as lecturer in botany at the then Glasgow & West of Scotland Technical College. From the year he arrived in Glasgow he was also involved with the Marine Station at Millport as a member of the committee in charge of establishing and running the permanent station (Moore & Gibson, 2007).

For a short time he was also Professor of Botany at the Veterinary College, but he soon resigned from this, when there was a big expansion in his main lecturing duties. His title of Professor may therefore seem somewhat honorific. Over 400 students were then attending his classes, with over 250 being instructed in practical botany, especially microscope work. His students were “of both sexes and every condition of life, aged from 16 to 60” - many were training as teachers, and not all had any interest in Botany.

As he found that many of his students did not follow lectures given on “ordinary botanical lines” he changed his approach and avoided technical terms, writing a book “with the view of helping the non-professional lover of nature studies” (Scott Elliot, 1903). He followed this with *A First Course in Practical Botany* (Scott Elliot, 1906) which he said was “the result of five years continuous trials at the Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College during which a combined course of flower study, experiments, microscope work and explanations had evolved itself ... [through] ... the stimulating effects on the author of enthusiastic students”. The ‘course’ was arranged to last from August to May and the 25 chapters were headed ‘Day One’ etc.

In his *curriculum vitae* (Scott Elliot, 1901a) he indicates the large expansion in his lecture courses and lists his ‘special subjects’ as Pollination, Economic and Geographical Botany, Yeast and Systematic Botany. He also lists his areas of botanical exploration, as well as noting that he had been “the most distinguished science student of the year” when in Edinburgh.

He edited an account of the local flora (Scott Elliot, 1901b) for the British Association Meeting in Glasgow, 1901. Prior to this he had carried out considerable work on the College’s Herbarium, which consisted chiefly of the collections of two of his predecessors, John Scouler and Roger Henedy. This work involved authentication of the names by specialists in the various groups. The herbarium now includes his collection of 305 lichens and 59 Bryophytes, and he also added to the collection from other sources, including colleagues in Scotland (Lloyd, 1964). His main personal herbarium, however, is now housed in the Dumfries Museum

While working in Glasgow he first lived in Wilton Mansions, but soon moved out of the City to Kilmacolm and finally to Kilbarchan (Post Office Directories 1897 – 1904). He seems to have felt strangely isolated while in Glasgow, for he complained to his friend Patrick Geddes that “I only have the rather dangerous companionship of demonstrators who do not criticise as much as I would like” (Geddes Papers, 1903).

He left Glasgow in 1903, and it was recorded in the Annual Report of the College that he resigned due to ill health. However, on 12 November 1903 we find him starting on a five months’ journey, this time with his wife, through the Andes from Santiago to Buenos Aires (Scott Elliot, 1907a). His book *Chile: Its History and Development* makes only passing references to his own experiences and gives little detailed information on the natural history of Chile, but he is clearly impressed by the country: “No one who has lived in southern Chile would seriously desire to live in Glasgow, London, Liverpool or Manchester”.

On his return from South America he settled back in his native Dumfriesshire. He had been elected

President of the Dumfries and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society in 1902 and continued in this position until 1909, after which he became Honorary Vice President. He had also been curator of their herbarium from 1896 until 1909, and maintained his interest in the Society's affairs to the end of his life.

He wrote three of a series of rather strange books entitled *Romance of ...*, published by Seeley & Co. of London. *Romance of Plant Life* (Scott Elliot, 1907b) was followed by *Romance of Savage Life* (Scott Elliot, 1908) and *Romance of Early British Life* (Scott Elliot, 1909). In the latter, in what might almost be autobiographical terms, he describes the people of the Lowlands of Scotland, especially of Dumfriesshire. "He is very tall, lean, broad shouldered, level browed and grey or blue eyed, with brown or fair hair and it is Scotchmen of his type particularly who naturally and inevitably drift out to the borders of the British Empire and to the most dangerous foreign countries ... When an unkind fortune draws him to a close town life he becomes horribly bored, and the result is disastrous".

With the advent of World War I his sense of duty and adventure led to him to be one of the first to volunteer for foreign service, although he was over age. "The bearded professor was transmogrified into a smart, if elderly, subaltern. They soon got his beard off him" (Scott Elliot Family Papers). He served with distinction under fire as a Captain in the King's Own Scottish Borderers in Egypt, and was awarded the Order of the Nile. "In 1917 he was torpedoed off the Italian coast when returning home on leave. He was not permitted to rejoin his regiment because of his age (55) and ill health, but was employed at home as an officer inspecting the Home Defence Corps". Ten years after the war he published the history of the regiment (Scott Elliot, 1928). Unlike many contemporary accounts this is warmly written with reference to the rank and file. It is of interest to note that his nephew, Major General James Scott Elliot, became Colonel of the Regiment in 1954, and he, also, became President of the Dumfries and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society, in 1962.

During his stay in Glasgow he had been closely associated with the Glasgow Natural History Society's antecedents (Ellis, 1936) and maintained this interest long after he left. His last recorded visit was on 13th December 1932 when he read a paper on the blaeberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) (Scott Elliot, 1933).

His last years seem to have been dogged by ill health. He and his wife bought a bungalow near Wadhurst, Sussex, where they were near his brother, Lieutenant-Colonel William Scott Elliot, and his family, but they later returned to Dumfries and he died on 20 June 1934 in a nursing home where he had been since the previous August.

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