

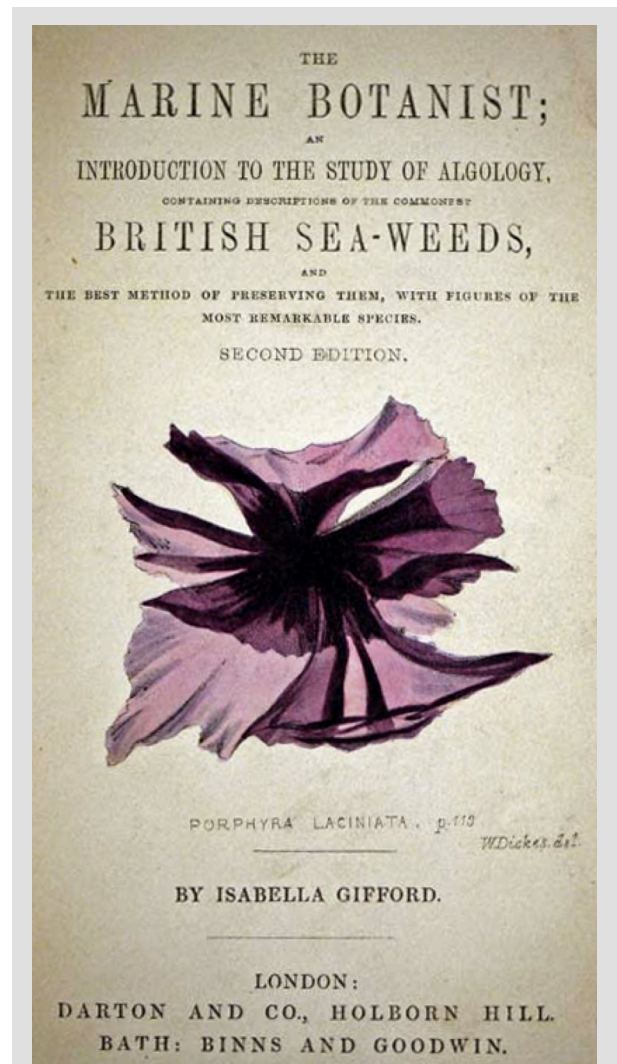
Isabella Gifford (1825 – 1891)

Isabella was the only daughter of Major George St John Gifford and his wife Isabella, née Christie, formerly of Wick House in Hackney, England, and Glanusk in the county of Brecon. For some time after their marriage on 12 October 1824, Captain Gifford lived in Wales as a land agent to his father-in-law. Isabella was born in Swansea, probably in 1825, and her brother Charles Bronllys Gifford about three years later. During the rest of her early years she lived with her parents in France, in Jersey (the Channel Islands) and at Falmouth (Cornwall) where her brother died in 1844, and then from the early 1850s, at Minehead (Somerset) on the south bank of the Bristol Channel.

Although tutored at home by her mother, who was described as a gifted and cultured woman of literary tastes, Isabel's interest and pursuit of scientific knowledge was without formal instruction or guidance; her parents encouraged her, but her botany was entirely self-taught. Her first and favourite study was the seaweeds, and her publication *The Marine Botanist* appeared in 1848. Its success led to two further "improved and enlarged" editions in 1850 and 1853, with illustrations by William Dicks (1815–1892). In 1853 also, she contributed her observations on the marine flora of Somerset to the *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*. Onshore, she explored and botanised in the neighbourhood of her home, developing a good general knowledge of the flora of southwest England, and in 1855 published a paper on the rare and most remarkable plants of the area. Particularly interested in the mosses, she frequently sent specimens of unusual ones to colleagues.

While her home life may have seemed quiet and isolated, Isabella made contacts, corresponded and exchanged specimens with other enthusiasts, and welcomed visits from them. She actively supported natural history organisations, including the Botanical Exchange Club from its formation in 1858, and towards the end of her life the London-based Selborne League, which later developed into the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. After the death of Major Gifford in 1869, his widow and daughter lived on at Minehead. Isabella's activities were later restricted by rheumatism and neuralgia, but she continued to get pleasure from her garden, conservatory and correspondence. Influenza struck the household just before Christmas 1891, and mother and daughter died within twenty-four hours of each other, on 25 and 26 December respectively. On New Year's Eve they were buried in the beautiful Minehead churchyard with its fitting backdrop of hills, sea and sky.

In 1893 the British phycologist Edward Arthur Lionel Batters (1860–1907) proposed to remove *Ectocarpus secundus* and its allies to a new genus, which in memory of the late Miss Isabella Gifford of Minehead he named *Giffordia*. A 2015 list of the marine macroalgal flora of New Zealand's Kermadec Islands includes *Feldmannia mitchelliae*, noting that it had been previously named *Giffordia* and was transferred to *Feldmannia* in 2010.



Feldmannia mitchelliae

Feldmannia mitchelliae (was *Giffordia mitchelliae*) honours the French phycologist Jean Feldmann (1905–1978) and Mrs A Mitchell, an American collector from Cape Cod, who sent seaweeds to William Henry Harvey (1811–1866) in Ireland. Another synonym (*Hincksia mitchelliae*) is named after Hannah Hincks (1798–1871) of Belfast. *Feldmannia mitchelliae* is a filamentous green to dull brown tufted alga up to 6 cm high. Widespread in tropical to temperate regions, it has been recorded in the Kermadec Islands, North Island and northern South Island, as an epiphyte or on rock in pools and shallows.