

Daubeny Herbarium history in brief

The Daubeny Herbarium (FHO) is the herbarium of the former Department of Forestry. Given its history, it is particularly rich in specimens from Tropical Africa and South Africa. There are also fine, worldwide collections from the families Ebenaceae, Meliaceae and Fabaceae. Specimens from the Daubeny Herbarium are being digitized and are accessible through the Explore tab.

Joseph Burt Davy was the first Curator of FHO, when the Imperial Forestry Institute started work in 1924 under the Directorship of Professor Robert S. Troup. Percy Greenway was Burt Davy's assistant and responsible for developing the collections. Under Burt Davy, systematic forest botany was concerned with the identification and naming of timber trees and teaching courses for forest officers. Accessions to FHO, approximately 6,000-8,000 specimens per year, reached 13,425 in 1929-30. The increase in material was mainly due to the efforts of Oxford-trained forest officers. Some specimens were purchased, but the majority of specimens were gifts or duplicates sent from forest departments for identification. The bulk of the material was African, although smaller amounts came from other areas, including Trinidad, Sri Lanka, Belize and Malaysia. Burt Davy was engaged in the preparation of several forest-tree lists and, by 1930, eighteen Colonial Forest Floras or annotated check lists were in preparation. Over the ensuing years this activity broadened into the production of Floras, monographs and other scientific publications.

Arthur Clague Hoyle joined the staff of the Forest Herbarium as forest botanist in 1929 to assist Burt Davy in the teaching systematics, identification of specimens and the writing of Floras and monographs. Early in the 1930s he began, at Burt Davy's suggestion, what turned out to be a life time's study of the genus *Brachystegia*.

By the early 1930s there must have been considerable activity in FHO. Apart from Burt Davy and Hoyle, work was being carried out by Helen Bancroft and Miss J. Dickson on floral morphology and the systematics of the Monotoideae (Dipterocarpaceae), Mr. Harvey Dunkley was employed as a Herbarium Assistant to identify specimens and, no doubt by then, there was at least one junior assistant, a specimen mounter and a secretary. In addition, there were several Forest Officers on leave working in the herbarium at any one time, visitors who stayed for varying lengths of time and the herbarium was still used for teaching systematics. Conditions must have been extremely crowded as the original accommodation had not kept pace with growth in staff and specimens. By the end of 1935 the herbarium collection had reached nearly 54,000 specimens and by 1937 the personal collections of H.V. Lely and B.D. Burt were incorporated into FHO.

In 1939 the Forest Systematics group and the Herbarium moved under the administration of the Botany Department, although the herbarium had to physically remain in the old forestry building. Hoyle took over as Curator of FHO and Patrick Brenan was appointed as Forest Botanist in his place to produce an annotated check list of Tanzania.

In the post-war period, A.P.D. Jones and R.W.J. Keay, worked in the herbarium on the taxonomy and ecology of the West Tropical African vegetation. H.E. Box presented his collection of *Cola* from West Africa to FHO. Preliminary work was started on the woody plants of Zambia and identifications were carried out on smaller collections from Uganda, Tanzania, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe. Brenan left the Forest Herbarium to take up an appointment at Kew, eventually becoming its Director, and was replaced by Frank White.

In 1950, Andrew Angus was appointed to assist White in the production of the Forest Flora of Zambia, whilst White continued his studies on the genus *Diospyros*. In 1951, the herbarium was finally moved to the newly-built Botany Department building on South Parks Road. In purpose-built accommodation, the herbarium collection was accessible, the carpological collection was transferred to new boxes and the spirit collection largely reorganised and relabelled. Maureen Griffiths arrived as Herbarium Assistant and started work on 'The Taxonomy and Ecology of the African species of *Terminalia*'. She was joined by Janet Chandler and they both spent much time preparing illustrations. By the middle of the 1950s, Angus and Miss Griffiths left to take up other appointments. Large

accessions were incorporated into FHO from Brussels and the East African Herbarium, as well as smaller amounts from Sabah, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

1959-60 saw many changes in the Forest Herbarium. White took over as Curator of FHO from Hoyle. Ghilleen Prance commenced work for a doctoral thesis on the Chrysobalanoideae, going on afterwards to The New York Botanical Garden before returning to Britain as Director of Kew. Brian Styles was appointed as a Senior Research Officer. So began the long association of FHO with research into the Meliaceae. Terry Pennington joined the group in 1961, first as a doctoral student on a study of the generic limits of the Meliaceae then as a Research Officer studying several South American genera. They were joined in 1973 by David Mabberley who studied *Chisocheton*. Caroline Pannell arrived in 1978 working on *Aglaia*. Thirty years research has resulted in FHO accumulating a comprehensive collection of Meliaceae.

Hoyle retired in 1971, the unwieldy *Brachystegia* still unfinished as a monograph. White was also appointed as Curator of the Botany Herbarium (OXF), so achieving some union between the two herbaria at last. Several changes in Herbarium Assistants during the 1970s and 1980s, and a focus on research, saw a decline in the amount of curation being done in FHO. Serena Marner was appointed to FHO, initially spending much time identifying large collections from the forests of Nigeria sent to FHO by Jim Chapman. The arrival of Jameson Seyani from Malawi in 1978 to commence a doctoral thesis on the genus *Dombeya* (Sterculiaceae) continued and consolidated the move from the training Colonial forestry officers to training of biology graduates. Alison Strugnell was appointed as herbarium assistant to FHO in 1986 to work with Frank White on identifying the large amount of material sent to FHO by Chapman from Malawi, and to tackle the mounting curation issues in the herbarium.

The 1960s saw the development of a Forest Genetics Group within the Oxford Forestry Institute to carry out research into the evaluation, conservation and improved use of forest genetic resources. Initially this was centred on *Pinus caribaea* in Central America but experience gained whilst investigating the natural populations quickly led to other tropical pines being included. Over the years attention was also paid to fast-growing hardwoods and in more recent years to multi-purpose Central American and African dry-zone genera such as *Leucaena*, *Gliricidia*, *Parkinsonia* and *Acacia*.

Brian Styles, as Forest Botanist, was an original member of this group firmly linking plant taxonomy with tropical forestry. He believed that sound taxonomy made a permanent contribution to the wise use and conservation of trees. Brian started working on the then little known pine flora of Central America in the 1970s, work which culminated in a monograph for *Flora Neotropica* completed and enhanced by Aljos Farjon after his untimely death in 1993. Brian always considered field work an important part of this work and his many collections, of the various groups he worked on, now reside in FHO.

Three of the Groups' projects in particular, on mimosoid legumes, have resulted in considerable collections of woody legumes being deposited in FHO. Firstly, Colin Hughes' study into the systematics of *Leucaena* resulted in a doctoral thesis, several publications and a monograph. Secondly, Duncan MacQueen's study of *Calliandra calothyrsus* and related species to resolve taxonomic problems and obtain a clearer understanding of genetic variation across its range in order to select suitable provenances for agro-forestry potential. Thirdly, investigations of the genetics and taxonomy of African acacias by Chris Fagg and Richard Barnes have produced large collections of these taxa. After an unsatisfactory research history of more than 60 years, new work to look at the taxonomic problems of *Brachystegia* began with the arrival, in 1995, of Augustine Chikuni from the National Herbarium of Malawi.

In the academic year of 1985-86, the University merged the departments of Agriculture, Botany and Forestry into one Plant Sciences department at the South Parks Road site. This finally put an end to the 'to-ing and fro-ing' of the forest systematics section between the administration of Botany and Forestry. During the transitional period, White retired and Mabberley and Quentin Cronk became successive acting curators. The Forest Herbarium (FHO) - by now renamed the Daubeny Herbarium -

was officially merged with the Botany Department Herbarium (OXF) under the umbrella title of the 'Oxford University Herbaria'.