

1972

(New Zealand National Herbarium Network, 2011)



New Zealand National Herbarium Network

Home

Herbarium details: Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa (WELT)

Herbaria

About

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History

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Contacts

- Links: [Organisation home page](#)
- [Herbarium home page](#)
- [BCI link](#)

Members' area

Location

Cable Street, Wellington

Background

Foundation

Established in 1865 as the Colonial Museum, became the Dominion Museum in 1907, the National Museum in 1972, and the Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa in 1992.

Status

Crown Agency with its own Act of Parliament (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Act, 1992).

Functions

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The activities of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa relate directly to the Museum's Act which states that its functions are, amongst others:

- To collect works of art and items relating to history and the natural environment
- To act as an accessible national depository for collections of art and items relating to history and the natural environment
- To conduct research into any matter relating to its collections or associated areas of interest and to assist others in such research.

A collection of plants from New Zealand and related floras is maintained in the herbarium for study by both amateur and professional workers. The staff of the herbarium carry out biosystematic research on selected groups of the New Zealand flora. They also provide botanical information requested by outside organisations and individuals, and prepare material for the exhibition and educational programmes of the Museum.

Scope of Collections

The herbarium contains a comprehensive reference collection of all plant groups, except fungi, occurring naturally within New Zealand. It includes both native and adventive species, as well as a small collection of plant fossils and a range of timber samples. It has an overseas collection, mostly of species from Australia, the Pacific, Europe, North and South America, and India.

The major importance of the herbarium lies in its wealth of historical collections and in its cryptogamic material. Since its foundation in 1865, the herbarium has attracted most of the private collections built up by New Zealand botanists since the time of William Colenso. Accordingly, it has more New Zealand type specimens than any other institution except K and BM. It also contains an extensive collection of cryptogams (ferns, mosses, liverworts, lichens, and marine algae), these being the fastest growing sections of the herbarium.

No accurate assessment of the number of type specimens in the herbarium is possible at present, but the total is probably over 2000. Brownsey (1979) lists pteridophyte types in WELT, and catalogues of other groups are being prepared. Angiosperm and gymnosperm types are estimated to total almost 1000, lichens c. 500, marine algae c. 150, pteridophytes 118, liverworts c. 100, mosses c. 65 and fossils 20. Substantial numbers of types are known to exist in all the important collections listed below. A few types from other collections are also held, particularly of liverworts.

In recent years some rationalisation of collections has occurred. In April 1979 the small collection of fungi in WELT,

including some 900 packets of Colenso material, was transferred to PDD on long-term loan. In 1978 WELT accepted on long-term loan from Otago Museum the Buchanan herbarium comprising 21 large, bound volumes of native plants including several types. The remainder of the plant collections from OTM were transferred in 1983.

Fossil specimens (including types) originally deposited in the Colonial Museum when it was located with the Geological Survey, are now at the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences, Lower Hutt.

Important collections

The Museum of New Zealand herbarium contains the main collection of the following New Zealand botanists: B. C. Aston, J. Buchanan (including material on long-term loan from Otago Museum), L. Cockayne, W. Colenso, T. Kirk, C. Knight (c. 8500 lichens and c. 2000 mosses), W. Martin (flowering plants only), J.H. McMahon, W.R.B. Oliver, D. Petrie, and G.O.K. Sainsbury (c. 19 000 mosses).

More detailed information on the main bryophyte collections is given by Hamlin (1971a, 1971b).

The herbarium has important duplicate collections of the following New Zealand botanists whose main herbaria are held elsewhere: J. Banks & D. Solander, S. Berggren, A. Cunningham, W.H. Harvey (algae), J.D. Hooker (mosses), V.W. Lindauer (algae), and H.H. Travers (Chatham Islands).

Major overseas collections include the herbaria of J.G. Baker and Silvanus Thompson (c. 28 000 specimens) acquired from BM in 1876. The Thompson herbarium is primarily comprised of cultivated material dated between 1790 and 1830 from continental European Gardens. Specimens from the former Royal Gardens at Herrenhausen and University of Gottingen (GOET) in Germany, and the nursery of J.M. Cels in France are well represented. In addition, specimens collected, donated or annotated by C. P. Thunberg, A. L. de Jussieu, R. L. Desfontaines, J.J.H. de Labillardiere, E.P. Ventenat and Dawson Turner (amongst others), are scattered throughout the Thompson Herbarium. The Baker Herbarium consists of material collected by Baker and others in the 1840s to 1860s, primarily from Britain and Europe.

Other overseas collectors include; F.B.H. & E.D.W. Brown (Pacific), Robert Brown (Australia), E. Christophersen (Pacific, Tristan da Cunha), E.B. Copeland (ferns), O. Degener (Hawaii), A. Fendler (ferns of Trinidad), C.N. Forbes (Pacific), F.R. Fosberg (Pacific), H. & J. Groves (charophytes), W.F. Hillebrand (Hawaii), O. Nordstedt (algae), J.F. Rock (Hawaii), H. St. John (Pacific), W. Swainson (South America), J. Tilden (algae), R. Wight (India), T.G. Yuncker (Pacific).

Ancillary Collections

In addition to the main collection of plant specimens there are several ancillary collections relating to New Zealand botany.

This includes photographs of about 400 pteridophytes from European institutions, several hundred marine algae, and fewer of recently revised genera (notably *Carex*, *Uncinia*, and *Coprosma*). All overseas types on loan to WELT are routinely photographed.

Extensive collections of black and white prints and colour slides of New Zealand vegetation and individual plant species are held in the Museum; many of these are of historical interest and date back to last century.

The herbarium holds original paintings of plants by John Buchanan, Fanny E. Richardson, and E.H. Featon. It has three sets of proofs of the Banks and Solander engravings (182 New Zealand plants and c. 440 from elsewhere), and 28 proofs of Forster engravings all acquired from the BM in the 1890s (Adams 1988). It has several sets of proofs of illustrations prepared to accompany Hector's unpublished Fossil flora of New Zealand. Numerous published illustrations are also to be found in Oliver's systematically arranged boxes of notes on the plants of New Zealand.

Original field notebooks or diaries of L. Cockayne, W.R.B. Oliver, B.C. Aston, A. Lush, and B.G. Hamlin are held in the herbarium as well as notes, papers, drawings, and correspondence of many earlier botanists associated with the Museum. A card index of all collectors represented in the herbarium has been produced, and biographical files, including published papers, photos, newspaper clippings, handwriting samples, and other documentary material, are being built up for the more important individuals.

From such sources, and from herbarium registers of the plant collections, it has been possible to compile botanical itineraries of D. Petrie, T. Kirk, and L. Cockayne (Hamlin 1958, 1965, 1967), B.C. Aston (Adams 1980), and W.R.B. Oliver (Pitt 1982). A large unpublished manuscript by the late B.G. Hamlin on the collections and journeys of William Colenso is also held, and a biography of John Buchanan is being prepared by Miss N.M. Adams (Adams 1990).

The botanical library associated with the herbarium is particularly strong in cryptogamic literature. Large reprint collections and many early taxonomic works relating to these groups are held. Manuscripts, together with original illustrations, submitted to the early volumes of the Transactions of the New Zealand Institute are still retained in the Museum. These include many papers that were not accepted for publication.