

The herbarium of William Skrimshire (1766–1829) of Wisbech

G. CROMPTON

103 Commercial End, Swaffham Bulbeck, Cambridge, CB5 0ND

and

E. C. NELSON*

c/o Wisbech & Fenland Museum, Museum Square, Wisbech PE13 1ES, Cambridgeshire

ABSTRACT

William Skrimshire (1766–1829), a surgeon of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, assembled a substantial herbarium before 1818 when he sold it to Viscount Milton. Subsequently Skrimshire went on collecting plants in the vicinity of Wisbech and adjacent counties. He was in contact with other botanists, most notably the Revd Richard Relhan, author of *Flora Cantabrigiensis*, and obtained specimens from them. Other members of the Skrimshire family, especially his brother Dr Fenwick Skrimshire, also contributed to his herbarium. While a manuscript catalogue of William Skrimshire's extensive herbarium survives, providing valuable records of the flora of Cambridgeshire, only about 200 specimens from his herbarium can now be traced; these are preserved in Wisbech and Fenland Museum (**WBCH**) and some constitute hitherto unpublished first records of Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire species. The extant specimens show that William Skrimshire was an inquisitive botanist and observant gardener. They also point to changes in the environment of Wisbech and its hinterland during the past two centuries. Some significant specimens from the herbarium of Skrimshire's one-time pupil and fellow surgeon, John Rose Weatherhead (c. 1787–1849), are also noted.

KEYWORDS: Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, history, John Rose Weatherhead.

INTRODUCTION

The Wisbech Museum (now Wisbech and Fenland Museum) was founded in 1835, and today still occupies the same building, in the town centre, that was erected in 1846 (Arthur 1985) to house the collections. Among the earliest donations were numerous natural history specimens, including several collections of pressed and dried plants which had been made mainly in the vicinity of the town by local amateur naturalists; the donors were Richard Dykes Alexander and Miss Alexander, J. R. Weatherhead, Mrs Algernon Peckover and Charles Metcalfe. In 1862, Mrs W. G. Townley and Mrs J. R. Weatherhead donated two substantial herbaria; the Weatherhead *hortus siccus* comprising seven volumes contained few specimens collected later than 1835. While the subject of our paper, the Wisbech surgeon William Skrimshire, had died six years before the Museum was established, specimens that he had gathered in the counties of Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire (v. cc. 27, 28, 29, 32, 53 respectively) during the 1790s and the first three decades of the 1800s, came to Wisbech Museum because they were contained in those separate herbaria.

The Wisbech Museum herbarium (**WCBH**: Kent & Allen 1984) has not been added to for many decades, so its principal interest is as an historic collection focused on the flora of Wisbech town and hinterland during the first half of the 19th century. For other reasons, many of the extant specimens are by far the earliest surviving specimens known to have been collected in Cambridgeshire (v. c. 29) and Northamptonshire (v. c. 32), and a smaller number are first records for West Norfolk (v. c. 28; these were noted by Petch & Swann (1968: 15)). With regard to

*Address for correspondence: E-mail: tippitwitchet@zetnet.co.uk

Cambridgeshire (which is the special interest of G.C.), while the foundations of the herbarium in the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Cambridge (CGE) were made by Professor John Henslow from 1818 onwards, Henslow's first specimens from the Wisbech area are dated 1831. The Wisbech Museum collections therefore are of considerable interest because they predate most of the material at Cambridge and so provide some voucher specimens for the first record of species from Cambridgeshire.

Information about the herbarium in Wisbech Museum was incorporated in D. H. Kent & D. E. Allen's *British and Irish herbaria* (1984: 71); they employed the acronym **WBCH**. The Museum Documentation Association's acronym for the Wisbech and Fenland Museum is **WISFM**, and all the herbarium specimens, which are presently being catalogued by E.C.N., now bear accession numbers prefaced by that acronym (e.g. WISFM: 1862.17.2.86). A fully annotated list of the specimens discussed in this paper can be obtained from The Curator, Wisbech and Fenland Museum; this list includes transcriptions of annotations on the specimens and the original nomenclature. In the following account all botanical names have been updated according to Stace (1991). When the botanical names inscribed on a herbarium specimen differ from present-day nomenclature the names in manuscript are quoted in brackets, e.g. *Helianthemum nummularium* (as "Cistus Helianthemum").

WILLIAM SKRIMSHIRE'S SPECIMENS AND MANUSCRIPTS

We are able to record and assess the extent of William Skrimshire's botanical interests and expertise by examining his reliquiae, which comprise three separate items preserved in Wisbech and Fenland Museum, namely:

- 1 His own manuscript catalogue of his herbarium; this was first described by Perring (1956; see also Bridson *et al.* 1980 (entry 435.1); Crompton 1994, 1996; Petch & Swann 1968).
- 2 An assortment of approximately 200 specimens, mainly representing higher plants, of miscellaneous provenance.
- 3 An *hortus siccus* of bryophytes (see Bridson *et al.* 1980) (this is not discussed here).

It should be noted that Petch & Swann's (1968) reference to "a large collection" of William Skrimshire's specimens in Wisbech Museum is inaccurate; Skrimshire's material represents a very small fraction of the Museum's herbarium (E. C. Nelson, unpublished data).

There are also some specimens incorrectly ascribed to William Skrimshire in Norwich Museum (NWH: see Kent & Allen 1984: 60, 244). The identity of the collector of this series of 300 specimens, all collected in 1801, is not known; despite an annotation in the Museum's register (23.91), William Skrimshire was not the person who assembled it, although a few specimens came from his garden (see below).

THE SKRIMSHIRE FAMILY

William Skrimshire (1766–1829) was the oldest son of William Skrimshire (1739–1814), and he had three brothers, Thomas, Fenwick, and George, and a sister, Elizabeth. Both Williams, father and son, were surgeons in Wisbech, and until his father's death William junior probably lived with, and practised with, his father in Ship Lane. Later he moved to the outskirts of the town, to Bushy Place – while the property's exact location has not been discovered, Bushy Place was almost certainly situated on the eastern bank of the River Nene, less than a mile north-north-east of the centre of Wisbech near Horseshoe Corner. There William had a garden, including a "peppermint plantation" where he evidently grew peppermint (*Mentha × piperita*) in some quantity presumably for distillation for medicinal use. William Skrimshire never married; he died in Wisbech on 22 July 1829.

Fenwick Skrimshire, born at Wisbech in 1775, took his medical degree at Edinburgh, and dedicated his thesis, *De assimilatione* (F. Skrimshire 1798), to his father and to his brother William. During 1797–1798 Fenwick was President of the Natural History Society of Edinburgh

(this society was established in 1782, and survived until 1812 when it amalgamated with the Royal Physical Society). During this period, Fenwick sent his brother many plant specimens from Scotland, including *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* ("From Dickson's Garden, Edinburgh ..."), *Gnaphalium sylvaticum* ("Given to my Brother Fenwick by his friend Mr. Brown. 1796."), a wild pansy from Ben Lawers that had been named "*Viola montana*" by John Mackay (1772–1802), and *Campanula rapunculoides* ("A very good discovery this, and as such Dr. Smith has noticed it in his Mem. A doubt arises with me whether it be not a rejectamentum Horti, as it is cultivated in Gardens. You will do well to be quite certain about this, as otherwise it cannot well be admitted as a native of our Island. ... Discovered by my Brother Fenwick Skrimshire, M. D. From Blair, Scotland. 1796."). Dr Fenwick Skrimshire settled in Peterborough where he was physician to the Fitzwilliam family (*Fenland notes & queries* 4: 211, 212 with copy from *Stamford Mercury* 5 November 1819), and by 1838 he was "Physician to the Peterborough Public Dispensary and Infirmary". He attended the poet John Clare (1793–1864), who was a native of Helpstone, a small village between Peterborough and Stamford whence came a number of the specimens collected by William Skrimshire (see below). In 1841 Fenwick Skrimshire filled in the application for Clare's admission to Northampton Lunatic Asylum, and on 29 December 1841 he certified Clare "following years addicted to poetical prosings." Fenwick Skrimshire wrote a number of books (see References) including *A series of essays introductory to the study of natural history*, the eleventh essay in this was entitled "The useful application of botanical knowledge" (F. Skrimshire 1805: vol. 2, pp. 125–181). He died in 1855.

Thomas, whose date of birth has not been discovered, was admitted a pensioner at Clare College, Cambridge, on 22 December 1791, and matriculated at Michaelmas 1793. Subsequently he "migrated" to Magdalene College under Holmes Charity, and graduated in 1798. He was later ordained and held a number of livings in Norfolk between 1800 and his death in 1836. While not himself a contributor to his brother's herbarium, Thomas' son George, who was apprenticed for five years (from 2 July 1817 to 31 March 1823; see Crompton 1994) to his uncle William Skrimshire, did; a specimen of *Aceras anthropophorum* "From Helpstone, near Milton. Northamptonshire. Given to me by my Nephew G. Skrimshire. 1821" is a first record for that county (v. c. 32; G. Gent pers. comm.; see below).

The fourth brother, George, a subscriber to one of Fenwick's books, was a farmer at Kettlestone, Norfolk. Their only sister, Elizabeth, married Charles Metcalfe, a solicitor, and their daughter "my niece Eliz. Metcalfe" sent specimens to William Skrimshire shortly before her early death in 1824 aged 22. Elizabeth Metcalfe's specimens include *Epilobium parviflorum* and *E. tetragonum* from Emneth, a village near Wisbech, an unlocalized specimen of *Helianthemum nummularium* (as "*Cistus Helianthemum*"), and *Minuartia verna* (as "*Arenaria verna*") and *Parnassia palustris* both from Derbyshire (v. c. 57). As noted above, Charles Metcalfe was one of the early benefactors of Wisbech Museum, presenting his brother-in-law's collection of mosses.

William, Thomas and Fenwick Skrimshire were keen entomologists. William and Thomas were elected Fellows of the Entomological Society, and both published papers in the first volume of the society's *Transactions* (see References). While Thomas Skrimshire "purpose[d] doing myself the honour of transmitting the Society a letter annually upon this subject [rearing insects]", we have traced only one published letter from him (T. Skrimshire 1812). The large copper butterfly, a native of the "marshes of Cambridgeshire", was discovered by Adrian Haworth "and my very dear friends, W. Skrimshire and F. Skrimshire, M. D." (Haworth 1803). Tutt (1905) commented that the Skrimshires probably saw the butterfly near Ely in 1797 or 1798 and afterwards went with Haworth to capture it, perhaps in Bardolph Fen, a short distance east of Wisbech in West Norfolk.

WILLIAM SKRIMSHIRE AS NATURALIST

Dr Fenwick Skrimshire (1802) characterised his older brother as "a very accurate and attentive observer of nature", and, judging by William's published articles (see References), as well as notices of plants and animals he collected, his interests were broad-ranging from plants and insects to the weather and phosphorescence. He reported that the roasted seeds of *Iris pseudacorus* could be used as a substitute for coffee (W. Skrimshire 1809); Grigson (1955: 419) noted this, but merely credited the discovery to a "Fenland doctor". More than a century later, during World War II, well-

roasted seeds from wild iris were used as a coffee substitute in the Channel Islands (see Vickery 1995: 409).

William Skrimshire assembled a substantial herbarium (*hortus siccus*). His manuscript catalogue of this now-lost herbarium is extant in Wisbech and Fenland Museum. The manuscript, purchased in 1829 by J. R. Weatherhead (see below) within two months of William Skrimshire's death, bears this annotation on the fly-leaf:

Catalogue of Plants contained in Mr Skrimshire's Hortus Siccus sold some years since to Lord Milton – and also of Plants contained in a Hortus Siccus bought by me and collected by Mr Skrimshire after the sale of the former. The mark ✓ indicates those contained in this collection. Sept. 12th 1829.

Comparison of the manuscript catalogue with specimens in Weatherhead's herbarium, presented to the Wisbech Museum by his widow, shows that very few of the ticked specimens have survived.

Viscount Milton (Charles William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, 1786–1857), son and heir of the second Earl Fitzwilliam whose physician was Dr Fenwick Skrimshire, had paid seventy pounds for William Skrimshire's collection of minerals and his *hortus siccus* in February 1818 ("Feb. 2 paid Dr [Fenwick] Skrimshire for his brothers minerals & Hortus Siccus (by draft on Snow) [£] 70.00." Northamptonshire Record Office Misc. Vol. 236: p. 75 (Private accounts (payments) of Fitzwilliam. Jan. 1812–May 1822. Fitzwilliam (Milton))). Lord Milton was a patron of natural history, "one of the oldest and most zealous friends of Natural Science in this country" (see Desmond 1994). He was one of the few subscribers to *Flora Graeca* (1806–1840) to receive the entire work (see Lack 1999: 213). No trace of Milton's herbarium and mineral collections has been found, and we must assume they no longer exist. However it is clear from the dates in William Skrimshire's manuscript catalogue and on herbarium specimens in **WBCH** that as soon as he had sold his herbarium to Lord Milton, he immediately started collecting and pressing plants again.

Like any modern botanist William Skrimshire often gathered, and evidently retained, a number of duplicate specimens, and thus there are some pre-1818 specimens in **WBCH**, derived from the now-amalgamated herbaria of Skrimshire's relatives and friends. The earliest date on an extant specimen, among his brother-in-law Charles Metcalfe's donation, is 1791; that year William Skrimshire gathered *Origanum vulgare* at Hunstanton, West Norfolk. The series of specimens shows that over the next 38 years Skrimshire not only collected in and around Wisbech but also wandered through Cambridgeshire and adjacent counties in search of interesting plants. Skrimshire's diligence in observing and collecting plants means that he can be credited with the first records of several species for Cambridgeshire (v. c. 29) and Northamptonshire (v. c. 32) (see Table 1). Although his contribution to Cambridgeshire first records was published in Perring *et al.* (1964), those data were based only on Skrimshire's manuscript catalogue and Relhan's *Flora Cantabrigiensis* (2nd edition 1802). Further research by G.C., particularly into the historical records and the Wisbech Museum herbarium, allows us to publish a revised first records list for the county (Table 1). The Norfolk records noted by Petch & Swann (1966: 15) all derive from Skrimshire's catalogue; they are *Cladium mariscus* (as *Schoenus mariscus*) and *Utricularia vulgaris*, both from Bardolph Fen, and *Persicaria bistorta* (formerly *Polygonum bistorta*) from Framingham (see Petch & Swann 1966: 165). The Northamptonshire data have not previously been published; its flora was much less well documented in the early nineteenth century than that of, for example, Cambridgeshire, so Skrimshire's specimens add significantly to the tally of first records.

One set of specimens provides a vivid record of one of Skrimshire excursions, which took place just three months after the sale of the *hortus siccus* to Lord Milton. Skrimshire travelled from Wisbech via Peterborough to Milton and Helpstone, the home-village of John Clare. On 25 May 1818, William Skrimshire foraged in Thistlemoor Wood near Milton, Northamptonshire, finding *Ajuga reptans*, *Anemone nemorosa*, *Fragaria vesca* (as "*Potentilla sterilis*"), *Ranunculus auricomus* and *Viola canina*. On the following day, perhaps having stayed overnight with Fenwick in Peterborough, William found *Pentaglottis sempervirens* (as "*Anchusa sempervirens*") in the cathedral precincts; "there were 3 or 4 Roots, growing in the Minster Yard at Peterborough on the E. side of the Building. May. 26. 1818". As he often did, Skrimshire also commented about his knowledge of the species elsewhere: "It is not found in the vicinity of Wisbech." On 27 May, he returned to the Milton area and visited Helpstone, gathering *Helianthemum nummularium* (as "*Cistus Helianthemum*") and *Hippocrepis comosa*. In some old gravel pits at Helpstone, he found

TABLE 1. FIRST COUNTY RECORDS FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Cambridgeshire (v.c. 29).

- § *Adonis annua*: (as “*Adonis autumnalis*”); near Bowling Green, Wisbech, c. 1820.
 * *Anagallis arvensis* subsp. *arvensis* f. *azurea*: (as “*Anagallis coerulea*. Abbot ... *A. arvensis* var. 2”); Bushy Place, Wisbech, 26 October 1822.
 § *Atriplex littoralis*: marshes below Wisbech, 1795.
 § *Atriplex pedunculata*: near The Black Tunnel below Bushy Place, Wisbech, 1826.
Beta vulgaris subsp. *maritima*: Relhan (1802).
 § *Cardamine hirsuta*: between Wisbech and Tydd Gote, 1794.
 * *Cochlearia anglica*: salt marshes below Wisbech, 1796.
 * *Cochlearia danica*: salt marshes below Wisbech, 1796.
 § *Corydalis lutea*: (as “*Fumaria lutea*”) Mr Peckover’s garden wall, Wisbech 1818.
 § *Datura stramonium*: Long Drove, Wisbech, 1818.
 § *Doronicum pardalianches*: Bushy Place, Wisbech, 1818.
Limonium bellidifolium: below Wisbech, 14 September 1795 (W. Skrimshire to J. Sowerby) [NB perhaps a Lincolnshire record; see discussion on p. 10.]
 § *Mentha spicata*: (as “*Mentha viridis*”); Bushy Place garden, Wisbech, 1813.
 * *Misopates orontium*: Bushy Place and Crab Marsh, Wisbech, July 1819.
 § *Orobanche ramosa*: (Wisbech, before 20 November 1795. T. J. Woodward to J. E. Smith); hemp fields about Wisbech, c. 1820.
 § *Rubia tinctoria*: (as “*Rubia peregrina*” in ms catalogue); Relhan (1802, as ‘Wild Madder’).
 * *Ruppia cirrhosa*: (as “*Ruppia maritima*”); salt-water ditch, east of Wisbech Tydd Gote road, 1795.
 § *Silene uniflora*: (as “*Silene maritima*”); see Perring (1956).
 § *Sisymbrium irio*: near Barton Lane, Wisbech 1797.
Triglochin maritima: Relhan (1802).

Northamptonshire (v. c. 32).

- * *Aceras anthropophorum*: Helpstone, 1821; *leg.* George Skrimshire.
 * *Ajuga reptans*: Thistlemoor Wood, near Milton, 25 May 1818.
 * *Anemone nemorosa*: Thistlemoor Wood at Milton, 25 May 1818.
 * *Bupleurum rotundifolium*: (as “*Euphorbia hiberna*”); neighbourhood of Peterborough, 1821; *leg.* George Skrimshire.
 * *Epipactis helleborine*: (as “*Serapias latifolia* ... *Epipactis latifolia*”); Milton Wood near Peterborough, 1816.
 * *Euphorbia exigua*: Peterborough, between that City and Thorpe, 1821. *leg.* George Skrimshire.
 * *Fragaria vesca*: (as “*Potentilla sterilis*”); Thistlemoor Wood at Milton, near Peterborough, 25 May 1818.
 * *Hippocrepis comosa*: Helpston, 27 May 1818.
 * *Pentaglottis sempervirens*: (as “*Anchusa Sempervirens*”); Peterborough Minster-yard, 26 May 1818.
 * *Ranunculus auricomus*: Thistlemoor Wood near Milton, 25 May 1818.
 * *Viola canina*: Thistlemoor Wood, at Milton, near Peterborough, 25 May 1818.

Unless otherwise stated, these records are attributed to William Skrimshire. * = voucher specimen exists in **WBCH**; § = record in William Skrimshire manuscript catalogue.

a splendid array of orchids including *Orchis ustulata*, as well as *Pulsatilla vulgaris* (as “*Anemone Pulsatilla*”). Although dated June 1818, a specimen of *Ophrys apifera*, which he called “*Ophrys aranifera*. Spider ophrys”, was also picked from the gravel pits. *Viola canina* grew on “a small Heath or Cover – on the left hand between Milton, and Helpstone”.

Perhaps it was on one of his journeys to see his brother at Peterborough that Skrimshire stopped at Cross Guns, a public house on the bank of the Nene at Wisbech St Mary’s parish boundary; the site of this pub is now occupied by the Cross Guns Pumping Station (TF/347.015). The nearby marsh yielded, for example, *Schoenoplectus lacustris* (as “*Scirpus lacustris*”) and *Potamogeton perfoliatus* (there are no voucher specimens for these in **WBCH**). Black Boy Low was another small pub, a short distance east of Wisbech almost on the Cambridgeshire-Norfolk border, illustrated by Algernon Peckover in 1841 (reproduced in Crompton 1994). Skrimshire collected

Geranium pratense "By the side of a ditch adjoining the Toll Bar between Wisbech and the Black Boy Low at Walsoken".

Further into West Norfolk, William Skrimshire visited Dersingham, and there collected plants typical of heath and bog, *Erica cinerea* and *Drosera intermedia* (as "*Drosera longifolia*") and *D. rotundifolia*. The voucher specimens are not dated. As for the round-leaved sundew, Skrimshire annotated it with a negative comment: "I have not found it nearer Wisbh. than Bardolph Fen."

The specimens of *Pentaglottis sempervirens* and *Drosera rotundifolia* just mentioned illustrate a remarkable aspect of William Skrimshire's herbarium. Frequently he added comments that inform us about plants *not* found in the vicinity of Wisbech. In this regard, Skrimshire is most unusual because the overwhelming majority of herbarium specimens are only labelled with the actual locality where each specimen was obtained. Another good example, displaying his intimate knowledge of the local flora, is a specimen of *Silene latifolia* labelled:

... *Lychnis dioica* [?] Smith L. *vespertina* Sibthorpe var. f. White Champion, or Cuckow flower. In a hedge at Bushy-Place 1818. Not uncommon in hedges and by Road's sides about Wisbech, but I have never observed the red flowered one, within 20 miles of this place; and I am persuaded that it is a distinct species from this Plant. W. S. 1818.

William Skrimshire was not just a gatherer of specimens. He was observant and inquisitive, and one of the plants that intrigued him was *Sagina maritima* which grew abundantly in the salt marshes on the banks of the River Nene (see Fig. 2) below Wisbech, not far from Bushy Place. Two series of specimens, each carefully pressed and mounted, are annotated at length (see Fig. 1):

... *Sagina procumbens*. var. *maritima*. These Specimens gathered the beginning of May, on the Salt Marsh near Bushy Place, grew upon the bare soil from which the Grass-sward had been cut the preceding year; and as the root leaves grew in a perfectly star-like form and the branches spread upon the bare ground as radii from the centre of the Plant the whole had a striking appearance. I labelled it at the time as above; but from frequent and attentive observation on the growth of this plant I have no doubt of its being the same with Dr. Smith's *Sagina maritima*. See the series of specimens on this sheet [f. 2] No. 1 Gathered the later end of May } 1818. No. 2 Gathered the middle of June } 1818. From the Salt Marsh near Bushy Place. f. 3 These three specimens gathered on the Salt Marsh near Bushy-Place June 30th. 1818.

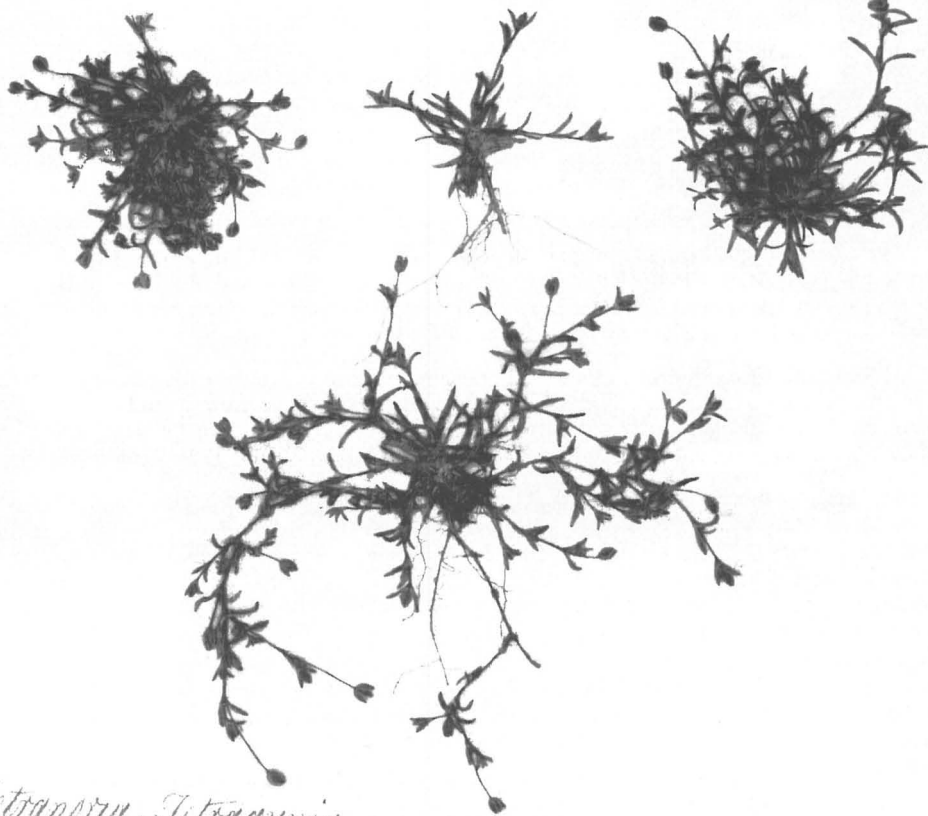
These six specimens were gathered by the River side below Wisbech. Near Bushy Place. Sr. J. E. Smith has made / this Plant / a distinct Species, under the specific name of *maritima*. Dickson published this plant under the name of *Sagina apetala*, in his *Hort. Sicc. Brit. Fasc. III*. But I think it differs from *S. apetala* sufficiently to entitle it to be ranked as a distinct Species. W. S. 1818.

James Dickson (1738–1822), one of the founders of the Royal Horticultural Society and of the Linnean Society of London, "a most wonderful fellow" according to the Revd Richard Relhan, issued his *Hortus siccus Britannicus: being a collection of dried British plants, named on the authority of the Linnaean herbarium* ... in 19 fascicles between 1793 and 1802 (Henrey 1975: III, 34). Although Skrimshire evidently had an extensive library of contemporary botanical works including William Hudson's *Flora Anglica*, Richard Relhan's *Flora Cantabrigiensis*, and James Edward Smith's *Flora Britannica*, he did not possess the relevant fascicle of Dickson's *Hortus siccus*. However John Nainby of King's Lynn had a copy and generously removed the specimen labelled *Sagina apetala* and gave it to Skrimshire so that he could compare it with those from his immediate stamping grounds. And Skrimshire duly and accurately labelled it:

... *Sagina apetala*. *S. maritima*. Comp. Fl. Br. * This specimen was taken from Dickson's *Hort. Sicc. Brit. Fasc. III*. and given to me by John Nainby of Lynn. This is exactly similar to what I find by the river side at Bushy Place, & which Dr. Smith has made a distinct species. 1818.

Plants that excited Skrimshire's curiosity were often gathered at different seasons, so that his herbarium specimens sometimes comprise more than one gathering. For example, he found an odd-looking *Lamium purpureum* at Bushy Place and was uncertain about its exact identity; Skrimshire labelled it "... *Lamium incisum*. Smith L. *dissectum*. With. L. *purpureum* [?] Huds.". He gathered specimens in March and April 1818, and mounted them together. Another sheet with

1862 72 40



Tetranorra. Tetragonia
Sagina procumbens, var. maritima.

These specimens gathered the beginning of May, on the Salt Marsh near Bushy Place, grew upon the bare soil from which the Grass-sward had been cut the preceding year; and as the root leaves grew in a perfectly star-like form, and the branches spread upon the bare ground as radii from the centre of the plant, the whole had a striking appearance. I labelled it at the time as above; but from frequent and attentive observation on the growth of this plant I have no doubt of its being the same with Dr. Smith's *Sagina maritima*. See the Series of Specimens on this Sheet.

FIGURE 1. William Skrimshire's herbarium specimens are usually meticulously documented, and neatly presented. This sheet of *Sagina maritima*, a species which he observed closely, displays the care he took (WBCH).



FIGURE 2. Alexander Peckover's watercolour showing the River Nene in 1825 ("Nene from near the Black Sluice in 1825"). The location was a few miles north of Wisbech town, and the tower and distinctive spire of the parish church can be seen right of centre on the horizon. Bushy Place, William Skrimshire's property, was between the Black Sluice and the town, and so would lie towards the right-hand margin of this view. (Reproduced by courtesy of Dr Peter Cave, and Wisbech and Fenland Museum; ©Wisbech and Fenland Museum.)

four specimens of *Mentha × piperita* displays the stages in the growth of peppermint:

... *M. piperita sylvestris*. Sole. No. 1. A young Shoot, in Spring. No. 2. The Stem in Summer before it flowers. No. 3. One of the Stolones from the main Plant in Autumn. No. 4. The Plant in full flower. 1813.

He frequently noticed colour variants. A good example is *Geranium molle*: "These specimens, one with Pink and the other with pale coloured Blossoms were gathered by the Road side at Bushy-Place, May 15. 1819. Common about Wisbech. 1819." The previous year on 29 June 1818 he had obtained it "With pale coloured Blossoms", probably from the same roadside bank.

WILLIAM SKRIMSHIRE'S GARDENS

William Skrimshire was evidently a keen gardener, and was just as interested in growing native plants as exotics. From annotations on specimens and in his manuscript catalogue, we know that he had a garden in Wisbech town, perhaps at Ship Lane where his father had lived, as early as 1801. It was from this garden that several of the anonymous specimens, now in the Castle Museum, Norwich (NWH), came: *Alchemilla vulgaris* "May 13th 1801 ... Archemilla [sic] Vulgaris ... gathered in Mr. W. Skrimshire's Garden Wisbech ...", *Geranium lucidum* and *Cymbalaria muralis* (as "Antirrhinum Cymbalaria"), as well as *Ajuga reptans* (although the latter specimen is not dated). John Weatherhead collected *Allium ursinum* "in Mr Skrimshire's garden Wisbech [in] May 1807" (WBCH).

One interesting annotation in his manuscript catalogue reveals that he sowed seeds of *Arabis*

turrita “on my Garden Wall at Wisbech where it continued to grow for several years”; this may have been as early as 1796 when the Revd John Hemsted (see below) gave Skrimshire a herbarium specimen of the species.

By 1813 Skrimshire had also developed a new garden and peppermint plantation at Bushy Place. Again using his annotations and notes, we can build up a picture of Bushy Place. It was probably surrounded by walls: Skrimshire gathered *Erodium moschatum* “on an old Wall at Bushy Place, Wisbech; May 21st. 1818. Very rare.” As well as the garden proper, there was the “peppermint plantation”, presumably a field in which he grew a crop of *Mentha × piperita*. There was an orchard, and “nut trees” (perhaps hazels) under which *Doronicum pardalianches* grew. The peppermint plantation was adjacent to Long Drove. Skrimshire found *Epilobium hirsutum* “In Long Drove, in the hedge of my Peppermint Plantation. Augt. 1st. 1818. It grows in a hedge at Tip-cock-Trees about a mile below Bushy-Place. Not very common at Wisbech”. The still-house in which he would have distilled the essential oil from the peppermint was also by Long Drove: *Vicia hirsuta* (as “*Ervum hirsutum*”) grew in “a Cornfield opposite my Still-house in Long Drove, Crab-Marsh. July 1. 1822”. (A house name “Mint House” is marked on the 1887 six-inch Ordnance Survey map at TF/457.109; it may have been built on the former site of Skrimshire’s still-house.)

He was fascinated by the weeds that grew in his garden and surrounding fields and often gathered specimens for his herbarium. For example the “*Anagallis coerulea*. Abbot ... *A. arvensis* var. 2. ... female pimpernel” (*Anagallis arvensis* subsp. *arvensis*) which “was wont to grow as a weed annually in my Old Garden at Wisbech”, was also “among the Peppermint in the Orchard at Bushy-Place; Wisbech” in October 1822. The voucher specimen represents *A. arvensis* L. subsp. *arvensis* f. *azurea* Hyl. (det. G. Crompton), and is the first record of this *forma* from Cambridgeshire. While he deliberately cultivated *Mentha × piperita*, Skrimshire found that *M. arvensis* was a “troublesome weed”, and he also gathered *M. spicata* in his garden at Bushy Place as early as 1813 according to a note in his manuscript catalogue. *Herniaria glabra* was collected by J. R. Weatherhead, who noted that “This came up as a weed in Mr Skrimshire’s garden”. The manuscript catalogue contains several other weeds. By 1828 great willowherb had become a weed at Bushy Place. *Euphorbia exigua* “used to come up annually as a weed in my garden ...” (the voucher specimen came from his nephew, George Skrimshire, and was collected in Peterborough); *Tussilago farfara* grew “On the Ploughed grounds by the river side, below [Wisbech]” and also was “in my Garden as a Weed at Bushy-Place. 1822”. Other casuals were *Campanula patula* “among the Peppermint in the Orchard, Bushy-Place, July 22, 1820”, and *Chenopodium urbicum*. *Carex spicata* grew in his “Grass-field in Tinker’s Drove. Wisbh.” – presumably the pasture for his horse (or horses) that kicked him (see below)!

Like present-day gardeners, Skrimshire battled with such weeds as *Convolvulus arvensis*, and his annotated specimens vividly illustrate his frustration; at Bushy Park in June 1818 this was “one of the most troublesome weeds that I have to contend with”. *Solanum nigrum* was condemned in stronger terms: “A common weed in Gardens, about Wisbech. It is one of the pests in my Peppermint Plantation at Bushy Place”. Less troublesome, perhaps, but no less worthy of pressing and mounting for his herbarium, were *Lamium amplexicaule* “Gathered at Bushy-Place, Sept. 21st. 1818. A Common Weed both in Spring & Autumn, in Gardens & Cornfields in Crab Marsh, Wisbech.”; *Lapsana communis* “From Bushy-Place, July 2nd. 1819 Common weed in Gardens and under hedges. 1819.”; and *Misopates orontium* (as “*Antirrhinum Orontium*”) “From my Garden at Wisbech, where it constantly comes up as a Weed. i. July. 1819. I have also observed it as a weed in my Garden at Bushy-Place, and in Cornfields in Crab-Marsh, Wisbech. 1819.”

THE RIVER NENE BELOW WISBECH

The grounds of Bushy Place merged with the River Nene (Fig. 2). Although the Nene is still tidal at Wisbech, Skrimshire’s herbarium specimens, and his manuscript catalogue, reveal the greater extent of saline habitats, including salt marshes and flats, in the vicinity of Wisbech two centuries ago, and thus also the extent to which maritime species penetrated inland in the early 19th century. There were substantial areas of salt-marsh not far from Bushy Place, on both west and east banks of the Nene, where he gathered *Salicornia fragilis* (as “*Salicornia herbacea*”), *Puccinellia maritima* (as “*Poa maritima*, *Glyceria maritima*”), *Centaureum pulchellum* (conf. G.C. & E.C.N.

1999), and several scurvy-grasses (including *Cochlearia danica*; conf. T. C. G. Rich 1999).

Other species from saline (or maritime) habitats that Skrimshire found near Wisbech, but which are now lost to the local flora, were *Limonium bellidifolium* (as “*Statice reticulata*”) and *Atriplex pedunculata*. *Limonium bellidifolium* was reported as being “very common on the salt marshes below Wisbech” by Skrimshire in a letter to James Sowerby dated 14 September 1795 (Boulger & Britten 1918: 259–261). Sowerby later illustrated this species in *English botany* (1796: tab. 328) using material collected “below Wisbech” and supplied by the Revd John Hemsted. A specimen (WCBH; Fig. 3) gathered by Skrimshire, “Growing with the S[tatice] *Limonium* on the marsh between St Peter’s Point and the Washway Aug. 14. 1821”, perhaps represents a Lincolnshire (v. c. 53) record due to the convoluted vice-comital boundaries. The same must be said of Hemsted’s gathering. In 1818 Skrimshire saw *Silene uniflora* (formerly *S. maritima*) “on the River-Bank on Eastfield” and entered the locality in his manuscript catalogue; as Perring (1956) noted, this was a new record for Cambridgeshire.

The banks of the Nene near Bushy Place were also inhabited by *Arenaria serpyllifolia*, *Cerastium glomerata* (as “*Cerast. vulgatum*. Smith Cer. viscosum With. ... *Cerastium viscosum*”; det G.C. & E.C.N. 1999), *Mentha arvensis*, *Papaver rhoeas* (as “*Papaver Rhaeus* var?”) and *Trifolium campestre* (as “*Trifolium procumbens*”). Other “river bank” plants, noted in Skrimshire’s manuscript catalogue, include *Briza media*, *Valerianella locusta* (as “*Valeriana locusta*”) and *Bupleurum tenuissimum*. *Carlina vulgaris* grew “upon Mount Pleasant with the *Carduus nutans* and upon Banks about Wisbech, otherwise not common here.” The local hedgerows yielded a bramble, *Rubus* cf. *corylifolius* (as “*Rubus* [fruticosus deleted] *corylifolius*. Smith. R. fruticosus var. 2. major. With[ering].”), and a “red purple variety” of *Viola odorata*.

WILLIAM SKRIMSHIRE’S ASSOCIATES

William Skrimshire did not botanize in isolation. He maintained contacts with many botanists both amateur and professional. An entry in Skrimshire’s manuscript catalogue provides an important record of one of his contacts. *Blackstonia perfoliata* (as “*Chlora perfoliata*”) was “gathered ... at Cherry Hinton, near Cambridge; in company with my friend Relhan. 1792” (there is no corresponding herbarium specimen in WCBH).

The Revd Richard Relhan had published his *Flora Cantabrigiensis* in 1785 and it contained some records from Wisbech, but none ascribed to Skrimshire. We do not know when he became a friend of Skrimshire, but there are five herbarium specimens in WCBH annotated by Skrimshire as having come from Relhan. These derive from the J. R. Weatherhead *hortus siccus* donated to the Museum in 1862 by Weatherhead’s widow, and are *Gnaphalium luteoalbum* “From Shelford, Cambridgeshire”; *Malva neglecta* (as “*Malva verticillata*”) “Discovered in Cambridgeshire a few years since and sent to me by my worthy friend The Revd. R Relhan. 1818.”; *Clinopodium grandiflorum* (as “*Melittis grandiflora*, *Melissa grandiflora*”) “from Mr. Relhan’s Garden, at Cambridge. 1795.”; *Pyrus communis* “From Hinton near Cambridge...”; and *Potamogeton compressus* (without a locality; conf. C. D. Preston).

There is one other Relhan specimen in Norwich (NWH); *Trifolium subterraneum* was annotated first by Skrimshire – “Given to me by Mr. Relhan. I have not found it about Wisbh. 1795” – and subsequently by the anonymous owner, “Mr. Skrimshire gave me this Specimen ...”. Four further Relhan specimens in WCBH do not appear to have been in Skrimshire’s possession, rather they were somehow acquired by J. R. Weatherhead; these are *Carex* cf. *viridula* (as “*Carex Oederi*?”), *Eleocharis acicularis* (as “*Scirpus pauciflorus*?”; conf. C. D. Preston, G.C. and E.C.N. 1998), *Jasione montana* and *Liparis loeselii* (as “*Malaxis Loeselii*, *Ophrys Loeseli*”).

As well as indicating a close link between these two men, the specimens reveal that Relhan may have had a garden. As we have already noted, Skrimshire was an enthusiastic and observant gardener, and perhaps he and Relhan exchanged living plants as well as herbarium specimens. In the second edition of Relhan’s *Flora Cantabrigiensis* (1802) there are more than 30 new county records ascribed to Skrimshire, including many for mosses, lichens and algae. Relhan (1802) paid this tribute to his friend, acknowledging William Skrimshire’s contribution to this edition, and stating that Skrimshire was “happily devoted to natural science and most skilled in his surgeon’s art.”

1/62. 17. 3. 11



Pentaria - Pentagynia.
Statice reticulata.
 Matted Sea Lavender or Thrift
 Salt Marshes below Wisbech.
 Growing with the *S. Limonium* on the
 marsh between St. Peter's Point and
 the Washway. Aug. 14. 1821.

FIGURE 3. This specimen of *Limonium bellidifolium* may have been collected in Lincolnshire (v. c. 53) (WBCH); Skrimshire first reported the species from the Wisbech area in September 1795.

Likewise, Skrimshire received many specimens, particularly bryophytes from the Newmarket area, from the Rev. John Hemsted (c. 1747–1824), one-time Curate of St Mary's, Newmarket (Oswald 1991). Skrimshire's acquaintance with Hemsted is confirmed by Hemsted's correspondence with James Sowerby (Mss in Sowerby Correspondence Vol. 26: The Natural History Museum, London). On 13 September 1796, Hemsted informed Sowerby that:

... I have received an Invitation from my Friend Skrimshire to come and spend a few Days with him which I propose to accept & to go down to Wisbeach next Monday, stay with him to the latter End of the Week & then go across Country to Bedford ... after which I shall be out no more & shall be happy to see you & Mr Skrimshire desires me to say that if you can give us the Meeting at Wisbeach he shall be exceedingly glad of your Company... [Vol. 26: 171].

Just over a week later, on 22 September 1796 Hemsted admitted he "was disappointed of my Excursion to Wisbeach. Our Friend Skrimshire having got a Hurt in his Leg by a Kick of a Horse ..." (Vol. 26: 172). A later visit was more productive, as Hemsted told Sowerby: "I had forgot to mention *Conferva Capillaris* found last Week in Salt-Water Ditches near Wisbeach." (Newmarket, 26 August 1797: Vol. 26: 174).

Apart from the numerous bryophytes, Hemsted gave Skrimshire the following specimens: *Arabis turrita* "From Cambridge ... 1796."; *Groenlandia densa* (as "*Potamogeton densum*"): conf. C. D. Preston) "gathered near Newmarket by Mr Hempsted ..."; and *Mentha* × *smithiana* (as "*Mentha gentilis*. M. rubra.α. Huds.") "Sent to me by Mr. Hemsted, from Newmarket. I have not met with it growing about Wisbech. 1795."

William Skrimshire had a wide circle of botanical friends. They included a fellow surgeon John Pitchford (c. 1737–1803), a Roman Catholic who practised in Norwich (Bull 1999: 36; Petch & Swann 1968), one of the first British botanists to study Linnaeus' works (Walker 1988). The two men first met late in 1795, as Thomas Woodward (1745–1820) related in a letter to James Edward Smith dated 20 November 1795; although Skrimshire is not mentioned by name the reference is clear:

M^r Pitchford has been at Wisbech to sell his estates, he met with a brother surgeon there who has found very good things in that country. *Orobanche ramosa* in plenty, as I always supposed likely from the soil on which I found it here, *Dactylis stricta* [= *Spartina maritima*], *Riccia glauca*, as he supposed but which I [?] took] at first sight (no great proof of extraordinary sagacity) to be a much better thing – *Riccia natans*, also *Ulva incrassata*. ... [Ms in Archives, Linnean Society, London; Smith Correspondence 18: 210]

This requires further comment. *Orobanche ramosa* is recorded in Skrimshire's manuscript catalogue from Wisbech. *Spartina maritima* has never been recorded for Cambridgeshire and is now believed extinct in Norfolk (see Beckett *et al.* 1999); as this record is not localized, and there is no entry in Skrimshire's catalogue, it is impossible to assign it to a vice-county. It is not improbable that *S. maritima* did grow in the lower reaches of the Nene in the 1790s. The comment by Woodward on *Riccia natans* (now *Ricciocarpos natans*), a liverwort, is confirmed by a specimen in Skrimshire's moss herbarium (**WBCH**) labelled "found in a ditch at Outwell between the town and the Toll-Gate 1795". There is also a specimen labelled *Riccia glauca* (= *Riccia sorocarpa*) that was "gathered by the side of some silt-pits, in a field opposite the Black-Boy-Low, Walsoken" (v.c. 28) but it is dated 1796, after Pitchford's meeting with Skrimshire.

In return, presumably, for specimens from Wisbech, Pitchford gave Skrimshire specimens of *Arabidopsis thaliana* (as "*Arabis thaliana* β") from "a Wall at Norwich ... 1799."; *Monotropa hypopitys* "gathered near Norwich ... 1797."; *Herminium monorchis* and *Orobanche elatior*, both unlocalized. Pitchford was as interested in the mints as Skrimshire (see Dawson 1934: 74–75; Bull 1999). He was a keen field-botanist, credited with the discovery of *Holosteum umbellatum* (Bull 1999) and the earliest Norfolk record of *Liparis loeselii* (Bull 1999), and he made this comment about the contemporary problems of a field-botanist in a letter to Dawson Turner dated 15 July 1797 (Ms in Dawson Turner papers, Trinity College, Cambridge):

... but for *Dianthus prolifer* [= *Petrorhagia prolifera*; see Beckett *et al.* 1999: 82] – alas! What shall I say, but that it is lost & lost I fear for ever to this Country, the unfeeling farmers, those mortal enemies of botanists, having ploughed up the ground to the very edge so that I had

some difficulty forcing my way along among the barley & weeds to the very end of the hedge row, as I was determined not to lose an inch of the precious ground where the dear creature used to grow. [Nelson 1997a, 1997b]

Although Skrimshire did not live far from the open sea – and as we have noted the River Nene is tidal – in 1821 he acquired a series of specimens of coastal plants from F. Coates of Brancaster, including *Salsola kali*, *Calystegia soldanella* (as “*Convolvulus Soldanella*”) and *Honckenia peploides* (as “*Arenaria peploides*”). Mr Lilly Wigg (1749–1829), who was variously a shoemaker, schoolmaster and a clerk in the Yarmouth bank owned by Dawson Turner, was another of Skrimshire’s contacts. Wigg is recorded as having instructed Dawson Turner in algae (Petch & Swann 1968; Desmond 1994). One specimen from Wigg was *Hieracium umbellatum*: “This specimen was sent to me by Mr. Wigg, from Yarmouth. – 1795. I have not found it near Wisbech.” According to Petch & Swann (1968: 219) Wigg’s hawkweed, reported from Norfolk by Smith (1807: tab. 1771) was “gathered on the beautiful wooded hills at the back of Thorpe, Norwich”.

The botanist and entomologist, Adrian Hardy Haworth, who was friendly with William and Fenwick Skrimshire, also donated herbarium specimens to William’s *hortus siccus*. Haworth was a succulent enthusiast and is commemorated in the southern African genus *Haworthia* (Aloaceae). There are several Haworth specimens in **WBCH**, including *Scilla verna* and *S. autumnalis*, *Potentilla rupestris* and *Salix lapponum*; whereas the squills could be native (the specimens are not localized), the rock cinquefoil and downy willow specimens were from plants cultivated in Haworth’s garden.

Individuals represented by singletons are Mr Hull – perhaps the Manchester physician, John Hull (1761–1843). William Skrimshire was “indebted for this wild Specimen [of *Polycarpon tetraphyllum*] to Mr Hull, who gave it to Fenwick. 1797”. The Rev. John Burrall presented Skrimshire with a specimen of Dawson Turner’s discovery *Tolypella glomerata* (Desv.) Leonh. (as “*Chara nidifica*”), from “splashes of Salt water at Cley on the Norfolk Coast”. There is a specimen of *Silene uniflora* (as “*S. amoena*”; conf. S. M. Walters 1999) “Given to me by Mr. Don, out of the Physic Garden. I have not found it about Wisbeach. 1795”. Almost certainly this came from the Botanic Garden in Cambridge, from its curator James Donn (1758–1813) (Walters 1981: Fig. 38, p. 45).

Other evidence for contacts with fellow botanists is obtained from correspondence and publications. Not surprisingly, William Skrimshire knew the remarkable duo of Norfolk-based botanists, Dawson Turner and Dr (later Sir) James Edward Smith, and the naturalist and publisher James Sowerby. There is a letter from Skrimshire to Turner, dated 10 July 1797, among Turner’s voluminous correspondence (Trinity College, Cambridge). There is also a letter to Sowerby (Ms. in The Natural History Museum, London) about specimens Skrimshire sent for illustrating in Sowerby and Smith’s *English botany* (see e.g. *Limonium bellidifolium* above). Among these illustrations was *Stratiotes aloides* published in 1797. Although Sowerby drew the illustration (Sowerby & Smith 1797: tab. 379) from a living plant sent by Skrimshire, the accompanying text does not state where he collected it. However in the manuscript catalogue of Skrimshire herbarium, there is an undated entry for *Stratiotes aloides* from Bardolph Fen, West Norfolk, and this may well have been its source.

JOHN ROSE WEATHERHEAD (C. 1787–1849)

John Rose Weatherhead was Skrimshire’s apprentice from 1803 for five years. By 1817 he was practising as a surgeon in partnership with Skrimshire, and lived in The Crescent, Wisbech. He became a keen botanist and corresponded with William Jackson Hooker, Professor of Botany in the University of Glasgow (and from 1841, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) on both botanical and entomological subjects. William Skrimshire credited his pupil with “probably” discovering a new species of beetle which had been washed ashore in a flood at Wisbech in 1812: “This pretty little Insect, which I expect is new to Britain, was first discovered this summer at Wisbech, by my Pupil, Mr. J. R. Weatherhead, an ingenious and industrious Entomologist” (W. Skrimshire 1812: 318).

Weatherhead’s own herbarium forms a substantial proportion of the collections in **WBCH** (Kent & Allen, 1964: p. 269 as Weatherhead, I. R.), but is not the principal subject of this paper.

However, a small number of specimens from him were evidently incorporated into William Skrimshire's herbarium, and sheets annotated in Skrimshire's distinctive writing (see Figs 1 and 3) include one of the hybrid *Stachys* \times *ambigua* J. E. Sm. (then called "ambiguous woundwort"), the progeny of *S. sylvatica* and *S. palustris*. This had been discovered by William Borrer and W. J. Hooker in Orkney and on the mainland of northern Scotland in 1808. Weatherhead, independently, found it near Edinburgh in August 1809 and sent a specimen to Smith who mentioned this fact in the protologue (Sowerby & Smith 1809). The specimen that belonged to Skrimshire records other details of Weatherhead's discovery, the annotation on the verso by Weatherhead himself being the more detailed:

[recto; W. Skrimshire] Found by Mr. J. R. Weatherhead in Augt. 1809 at the foot of one of the Pentland Hills, in a moist boggy place about a Mile and a half from Hubbies How. He presented me with this specimen. 1810.

[verso; J. R. Weatherhead] *Stachys ambigua*. "I found this plant in Augt. 1809 at the foot of one of the Pentland Hills in a moist & boggy place about a mile and a half from [Edinburgh – del.] Hubbies How, a specimen was sent to Dr Smith who considered it as new; it had however been found during the preceding summer in the orknie & some parts of the North of Scotland. Dr Smith has named it *ambigua*. It was growing inter-mixed with *S. sylvatica*, but no specimen of *S. palustris* could be found near it." J. R. Weatherhead.

The specimen from Skrimshire's herbarium, and a second one, both contained in Weatherhead's *hortus siccus* (**WBCH**), must be isotypes, although their precise status remains to be determined.

In September 1829, following William Skrimshire's death, Weatherhead bought Skrimshire's herbarium and with it the manuscript catalogue. As already mentioned, Weatherhead then marked with a tick all the specimens he had acquired. These specimens were presumably amalgamated with Weatherhead's own extensive herbarium, and many may even have been remounted and re-labelled because most of the specimens marked by a tick are not present in the two sets of Weatherhead specimens now in **WBCH**. Weatherhead himself presented four volumes of herbarium specimens to the Wisbech Museum in 1835; there do not appear to have been any of William Skrimshire's specimens in this collection. Thirteen years after Weatherhead's own death in 1849, his widow presented seven further volumes of herbarium specimens. It was this collection that contained most of the Skrimshire specimens now in **WBCH**, including the first confirmed and the only record for Cambridgeshire of the rare *Ruppia cirrhosa* (as "*Ruppia maritima*"; det. C. D. Preston 1993) collected by Skrimshire:

... in a salt water Ditch at Walton, near the River about 3 miles below Wisbech [v. c. 28]. I have also gathered it in a ditch which admits the tides, in a lane on the Right hand side of the Road from Wisbech to Tidd between the 3rd and 4th. milestones [v. c. 29]. It grows plentifully in the ditches at Long Sutton Wash-way, below Wisbech. 1795 [v. c. 53].

CONCLUSION

William Skrimshire's manuscript catalogue and the few of his specimens that are available for study have provided several previous authors with material for their respective Floras. The Cambridgeshire records extracted by F. H. Perring from these reliquiae are listed on the Cambridge Natural History Society's card index held in the herbarium, Department of Plant Sciences, Cambridge. The Norfolk specimens are listed in the late E. L. Swann's card index, now with Mrs G. Beckett.

With his varied interests in natural history, and his undoubted knowledge, William Skrimshire must have been a focus for the amateur naturalists living in the Wisbech neighbourhood in the late 18th and early 19th century. His manuscript catalogue and herbarium specimens represent an archive of considerable value, especially as a foundation for historical studies of the flora of Wisbech and the north-eastern sector of the old county of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, and the adjacent parts of West Norfolk.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to successive Curators of Wisbech and Fenland Museum, Mr D. Devenish and Dr R. Hanley, for allowing us to examine the herbarium collections, and we would like to express our particular thanks to Jill Rayment and Robert Bell, not only for all their assistance but also for finding so many sources of information and enlightenment about the Skrimshire family history. We are also indebted to Dr Michael Lewis of Oundle for information on Dr Fenwick Skrimshire's achievements as a physician at Peterborough. G.C. also acknowledges the co-operation of Dr Peter Gillam who kindly showed her relics of his ancestor Dr George Skrimshire. Dr C. D. Preston (especially *Potamogeton*, *Ruppia*), Dr S. M. Walters (*Silene*) and Dr T. C. G. Rich (*Cochlearia*) checked the identities of some of Skrimshire's specimens. Mrs Gill Gent kindly confirmed Skrimshire's first records for Northamptonshire.

We are grateful to the Wisbech Society for allowing us to publish excerpts from G.C.'s papers published in its annual reports (1994 and 1996).

REFERENCES

- ARTHUR, J. L. (1985). *AI among country museums*. Friends of The Wisbech and Fenland Museum, Wisbech.
- BECKETT, G., BULL, A. & STEVENSON, R. (1999). *A flora of Norfolk*. Gillian Beckett, Stanhoe, Norfolk.
- BOULGER, G. S. & BRITTEN J. (1918). Joseph Andrews and his herbarium. *Journal of botany* **56**: 257–261.
- BRIDSON, G. D. R., PHILLIPS, V. C. & HARVEY, A. P. (1980). *Natural history manuscript resources in the British Isles*. Mansell, London.
- BULL, A. (1999). The Norfolk botanists, in BECKETT, G., BULL, A. & STEVENSON, R. *A flora of Norfolk*. 39–41. Gillian Beckett, Stanhoe, Norfolk.
- CROMPTON, G. (1994). William Skrimshire 1766–1829. *The Wisbech Society annual report* **55**: 17–20.
- CROMPTON, G. (1996). Postscript to William Skrimshire. *The Wisbech Society annual report* **57**: 6.
- DAWSON, W. R. (1934). *Catalogue of the manuscripts in the library of The Linnean Society of London, part I. The Smith papers (The correspondence and miscellaneous papers of Sir James Edward Smith, M. D., F. R. S., First President of the Society)*. Linnean Society, London.
- DESMOND, R. G. C. (1994). *Dictionary of British and Irish botanists and horticulturists*. Taylor & Francis & The Natural History Museum, London.
- GRIGSON, G. (1955). *The Englishman's flora*. Phoenix House, London.
- HAWORTH, A. (1803). *Lepidoptera Britannica*. London.
- HENREY, B. (1975). *British botanical and horticultural literature before 1800*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- KENT, D. H. & ALLEN, D. E. (1984). *British and Irish herbaria*. Botanical Society of the British Isles, London.
- LACK, H. W. (1999). *The Flora Graeca story. Sibthorp, Bauer and Hawkins in the Levant*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- NELSON, E. C. (1997a). Botanists and the farming community. *BSBI news* **74**: 31.
- NELSON, E. C. (1997b). Botanists and the farming community. *BSBI news* **75**: 31.
- OSWALD, P. (1991). The Revd John Hemsted (1747?–1824). *Nature in Cambridgeshire* **33**: 26–29.
- PERRING, F. H. (1956). An MS. in Wisbech Museum. *Proceedings of the Botanical Society of the British Isles* **2**: 133.
- PERRING, F. H., SELL, P. D., & WALTERS, S. M. (1964). *A Flora of Cambridgeshire*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- PETCH, C. P. & SWANN, E. L. (1968). *Flora of Norfolk*. Jarrold & Sons, Norwich.
- RELHAN, R. (1785). *Flora Cantabrigiensis*, Pp. xxii, 490. Cambridge.
- RELHAN, R. (1802). *Flora Cantabrigiensis*, 2nd ed. Pp. xvi, 568. Cambridge.
- SKRIMSHIRE, F. (1798). *Dissertatio ... de assimilatione ...*. Edinburgh.
- SKRIMSHIRE, F. (1800). *Information to parents, respecting the vaccine inoculation; or the inoculation for the cow-pox*. Wisbech.
- SKRIMSHIRE, F. (1802). *A series of popular chymical essays*. London (2nd edition. London 1804).
- SKRIMSHIRE, F. (1805). *A series of essays introductory to the study of natural history*. 2 vols. London.
- SKRIMSHIRE, F. (1834a). *Letters on the consumption of malt, addressed respectively to the farmer, labourer and labourer's friend*. J. Ridgeway & Son, London.
- SKRIMSHIRE, F. (1834b). *Every poor man his own brewer; a letter addressed to the labourer of every class*. J. Ridgeway & Son, London.
- SKRIMSHIRE, F. (1838). *The village pastor's surgical and medical guide; in letters from an old physician to a young clergyman his son, upon his entering upon the duties of a parish priest*. London.

- SKRIMSHIRE, T. (1812). On rearing insects. *Transactions of the Entomological Society* **1**: 70–72.
- SKRIMSHIRE, W. jun. (1806). On the absorption of electric light by different bodies. *Nicholson's journal of natural philosophy* **15**: 281–283.
- SKRIMSHIRE, W. jun. (1807a). On the absorption of electric light by different bodies, and some of their habitudes with respect to electricity. *Nicholson's journal of natural philosophy* **16**: 101–107.
- SKRIMSHIRE, W. jun. (1807b). On the habitudes of saline bodies with regard to electricity. *Nicholson's journal of natural philosophy* **17**: 12–18.
- SKRIMSHIRE, W. jun. (1808a). On the phosphorescence of bodies, from the action of the electric explosion. *Nicholson's journal of natural philosophy* **19**: 153–156.
- SKRIMSHIRE, W. jun. (1808b). On the quantity of fecula in different varieties of the potato. *Nicholson's journal of natural philosophy* **21**: 71–76.
- SKRIMSHIRE, W. jun. (1808c). On the fecula of potatoes, and some other British vegetables. *Nicholson's journal of natural philosophy* **21**: 182–191.
- SKRIMSHIRE, W. jun. (1809). Account of a British vegetable product [*Iris pseudacorus*], that may be substituted for coffee. *Nicholson's journal of natural philosophy* **22**: 70–73.
- SKRIMSHIRE, W. jun. (1812). Remarks on some rare insects found during a flood at Wisbech. *Transactions of the Entomological Society* **1**: 315–322.
- SKRIMSHIRE, W. (1816). Observations on the late excessive cold weather. *Philosophical magazine* **47**: 182–185.
- STACE, C. A. (1991). *New flora of the British Isles*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- TUTT, J. W. (1905). *A natural history of the British butterflies*. Vol.1, pp. 420–421. Elliot Stock, London.
- VICKERY, R. (1995). *A dictionary of plant lore*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- WALKER, M. (1998). Sir James Edward Smith M. D., F. R. S., P. L. S. 1759–1828 First President of the Linnean Society of London. Linnean Society, London.
- WALTERS, S. M. (1981). *The shaping of Cambridge botany*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

(Accepted June 1999)