

SHORT NOTE

H. F. PARSONS' HERBARIA

The note by A. H. G. Alston (1950, *Watsonia*, 1, 242) mentioning the herbaria of Dr H. F. Parsons prompts a further account of his herbarium at Croydon.

Henry Franklin Parsons was a medical officer by profession, an expert on public health and sanitation, and a keen naturalist. His most important botanical publication, viewed in retrospect, is his account of the flora of the Surrey commons (1912, *Proc. Croydon N.H.S.*, 7, 57).

The *Proceedings of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society* (1914, 7, clxxiv), at the end of his obituary notice, records that with the exception of his Somerset specimens, which were left to the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, he left the whole of his collections to the Croydon society "for the Croydon Museum." The notice continues: "It is earnestly hoped that the local Authorities will accept them, and either place them in the Grange Wood Museum or provide a museum worthy of the town to receive them. They consist of a splendid geological collection containing some 10,000 specimens, chiefly fossils, all carefully named and mounted. A most complete British herbarium in good condition, and specially rich in Mosses, Lichens and Fungi. A considerable collection of land and freshwater shells, a number of microscope slides, and a large number of scientific works . . . etc."

Inspection of Parsons' will at Somerset House shows that he actually left all his collections to his executors for disposal as instructed by him, and these instructions were evidently as outlined above. The Somerset collection is the herbarium now at Taunton museum.

The only public museum in the borough of Croydon was a couple of rooms opened in the early years of the century in Grangewood recreation ground, S.E.25, and it was here that the Parsons herbarium was placed. Very shortly afterwards the museum was closed owing to the war, and was not reopened until 1920. I have so far not been able to find out whether the Parsons collections ever went back there; they were in the Society's own rooms at the outbreak of the second world war, when the Grangewood building was again closed and has remained so.

The geological collection appears to have lost its identity amongst the Society's collection, which is in need of renovation. A large number of the microscope slides, some of which are of botanical subjects, had perished at the outset, but a goodly collection still survives. The herbarium was arranged by Society members, probably under the leadership of Miss E. F. Klaasen, in 1914-16, and was cleaned some time in the 'thirties when it appears that some sheets attacked by insects were,

unfortunately, thrown away. I am at present cleaning it again; it is in surprisingly good condition considering that it had been neglected for over ten years.

The herbarium is at present in the Society's room at Eldon House, Croydon, and is in three cabinets: (i) A Surrey collection, of about 800 sheets ($11 \times 17''$), of phanerogams and ferns collected by Parsons, C. E. and E. S. Salmon, E. S. Marshall, E. Straker, G. W. Nicholson, H. T. Mennell, F. H. Ward, and others; (ii) a general British collection, on about 800 sheets ($10\frac{1}{2} \times 13''$, mainly folders), of phanerogams and ferns collected by Parsons, Salmon, F. A. Lees, W. R. Haywood, M. Patten, J. Pagan, J. C. Hutcheson, A. T. Teuton, and others; and (iii) a general collection of British bryophytes, fungi, and lichens, which is very comprehensive, as Parsons received specimens through exchange clubs and from W. Bellerby, W. H. Burrell, W. R. Sherrin, A. R. Horwood, J. Glover, J. C. Wilson, and others. The collections are mainly over the period 1870-1910.

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