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Melvill, James Cosmo (1845 – 1929)

Posted on [January 13, 2011](#) by [Chris](#)

Melvill began collecting when he was 8; the starting point being some shells from Mauritius given to him by his aunt. He was, however, an avid collector and interested in many aspects of Natural History. He collected not only molluscs (from around the world), but also British butterflies and moths, beetles and bees. Whilst at school, he wrote a Harrow *Flora*.

His botanical collection was vast. Melvill and his friend, Charles Bailey (another prodigious collector) came to an understanding early in their collecting 'careers'. As they were resolved to leave their respective herbaria to Manchester University (formerly Owen's College), they did not want their collections to overlap. They agreed 'to divide the world between them'. Bailey focused on the British Isles, Europe and African countries bordering the Mediterranean; whilst Melvill collected from countries other than European and North African, though he did have a significant collection of British plants (and seaweeds) in his herbarium, which he gave to Harrow. His gift to the University was acknowledged by the conferment of the degree of Doctor of Science.

Born in 1845 in Hampstead, he was the son of James Cosmo Melvill, the Under Secretary of State for India. His grandfather, another James Cosmo Melvill, was Chief Secretary of the East India Company. He was educated at Harrow and then Trinity College, Cambridge. He lived for some years in Prestwich, near Manchester, then at Meole Brace Hall, near Shrewsbury. He worked as a Director of G & R Dewhurst Ltd (cotton merchants) for many years.

Memoirs and proceedings of the
Manchester Literary & Philosophical
Society, Vol 44 (image above)

March 29th, 1898.] PROCEEDINGS. xxix

Special Meeting, March 29th, 1898.

JAMES COSMO MELVILL, M.A., F.L.S., President, in the Chair.

- Source Material
- Journal of Molluscan Studies, vol 19
(2),p 59-61
- Manchester Memoirs, Vol 61, (1917), No 5 'On the contents of a herbarium of British and foreign Plants for presentation to the Victoria University, Manchester' by Charles Bailey. North Western Naturalist, Vol 5, (1930) 'Three Manchester Botanists : Leopold Hartley Grindon, Charles Bailey, James Cosmo Melvill' by Professor F E Weiss.

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3 Responses to Melvill, James Cosmo (1845 – 1929)

Chris says:

February 22, 2012 at 9:44 pm

Thanks

Jim Middleton says:

February 22, 2012 at 8:51 pm

There appears to be a photo of him here:

http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Cosmo_Melville

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