

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Discovery of manuscripts on *Gramineae* and *Cyperaceae* by C. G. Nees von Esenbeck

A number of important, extensively annotated, books from the library of George Walker-Arnott (1799–1868) have recently come to light in the library of the Botany Department of the University of Glasgow. As the annotations refer extensively to Arnott's herbarium, which has been on permanent loan to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (E) since 1966, the books have now been placed on long loan to E.

Of particular importance are four substantial bound manuscripts by the German botanist Christian Gottfried Nees ab [von] Esenbeck (1776–1858) relating to *Gramineae* and *Cyperaceae*. They bear the following cryptic (not to say misleading) spine labels, which no doubt contributed to their neglect:

Gramineae Judicae N at E
Gramineae Lindleyanae N ab E
Gram et Cyper Ind. Suppl. N at E
Cyperaceae Ind N ab E

Arnott was the friend and botanical collaborator of Robert Wight and it was he who helped Wight sort out his vast Indian herbarium while the latter was on home leave in Edinburgh in 1831–1834. During this period they worked on various joint publications and the top set of Wight's herbarium (and therefore the types) were left with Arnott, who took them to Glasgow when he succeeded W.J. Hooker as Professor of Botany in 1845. As part of this work they sent the Wight specimens of particular families to various specialists, including Nees, then in Breslau. Along with these it would seem that they also sent material from Royle's herbarium (now at LIV) and some from the 'Wallich' herbarium, in order to make the treatments as complete as possible for their great projected *Prodromus Florae Peninsulae Indiae Orientalis*, of which only the first volume was published (in 1834). The connection between Arnott and Lindley is not clear, nor why the volume 'Gramineae Lindleyanae' should have come into Arnott's possession, especially as it includes material from all over the world, and not just from India. The Lindley herbarium (except for the *Orchidaceae*) is now at Cambridge (CGE).

Much work is needed on these manuscripts, some of which will be important in typification, as in the case of *Poa himalayana* (see Noltie, 2000). Although mostly in the hand of copyists, they bear numerous annotations by Arnott and corrections in Nees' own hand.

'Gramineae Judicae', which should in fact read Gramineae Indicae, appears to be the unpublished manuscript for the grass section of Wight and Arnott's *Prodromus Florae Peninsulae Indiae*. In the Preface of this work the authors state 'Professor Nees von Esenbeck ... has likewise transmitted us a manuscript containing the description of the Solanaceae and Gramineae, and is also at present engaged with

our Cyperaceae'. At least some of the descriptions of new genera from the manuscript were published in other places, e.g. *Hygrorhiza* by Wight and Arnott in the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* (Vol. 15, p. 380, 1833), and *Enteropogon* and *Amphidonax* by Lindley in the second edition of his *A Natural System of Botany* (1836). As in the case of *Poa himalayana*, some of the species descriptions and names were first published by Steudel in *Synopsis Plantarum Glumacearum* (1854–1855), though often omitting some of the important specimen citations.

Steudel evidently also had access to the Lindley volume (or at least to a duplicate of the same manuscript), since at a quick glance it contains descriptions of species published by Steudel and cited as 'Nees mspt.' e.g. *Brizopyrum ovatum*. In this case, as with *Poa himalayana*, the specimen number is not quoted in the published version, but is given in the manuscript (Cuming 366). This volume also includes descriptions of *Cyperaceae* in Lindley's herbarium.

'Cyperaceae Ind' turns out to have been published almost in its entirety. The bulk forms the third section (*Cyperaceae*) of Wight's *Contributions to the Botany of India* (1834). This is a slightly odd work: Wight is given as the 'author', but although it is based largely on specimens in his herbarium he actually wrote very little of it. It consists of three parts: I, descriptions of *Compositae* in Wight's herbarium by A.P. de Candolle; II, descriptions of *Asclepiadaceae* by Wight and Arnott; III, descriptions of *Cyperaceae* by Nees. The second and third parts describe not only specimens in Wight's herbarium, but additional material from the other great Indian collections then available – those of Wallich and Royle. The editing and putting together seems to have been done by Arnott. The 'Cyperaceae' manuscript is found to be the corrected one from which part III of the *Contributions* was printed, but Arnott had abstracted the descriptions of new genera and published them earlier the same year in the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* (Vol. 17, pp. 260–267, 1834).

Reference

NOLTIE, H. J. (2000). Notes relating to the Flora of Bhutan: XL. *Gramineae* III, the genus *Poa*. *Edinb. J. Bot.* 57(2): 279–289.

H. J. NOLTIE, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 20A Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5LR, UK.