

JOHN SMITH KEW'S FIRST CURATOR

John Smith is an undeservedly neglected figure in the history of the Gardens. He worked at Kew when its fortunes were at their lowest ebb, and under Sir William Hooker, held the post of Curator for 23 years.

He was born on 5th October, 1798, in Aberdour, Fifeshire, where his father was gardener to a Mr. Stewart. From an early age he showed an interest in gardening, and consequently on leaving school at 13 entered an apprenticeship to his father, then gardener to Thomas Bruce of Grangemuir. With the aid of Abercrombie's "Universal gardener's kalendar" and Lee's "Introduction to Botany", he gradually acquired a basic knowledge of botany. When his apprenticeship ended in November, 1815, he was engaged as journeyman in the garden of Robert Ferguson of Raith, near Kirkcaldy. Here, for the first time, he saw *Strelitzia reginae*, succulent euphorbias and cacti. However, as the youngest labourer, there was little opportunity for study, and after a year he obtained a post on the estate of the Earl of Moray, at Donibristle, near Aberdour. In November, 1817, he moved to Caley House, Kirkcudbrightshire, where he was given access to the library which included a set of the "Botanical Magazine". Through his father's acquaintance with William McNab, Curator of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, he was taken on there as a journeyman in 1818. McNab, who, incidentally, had worked at Kew from 1801 to 1810, encouraged the young man's interest in botany, and lent him a book on Jussieu's natural system. He was allowed to attend lectures on botany, and in his leisure time studied and collected the local flora. In 1820 he left Edinburgh with a letter of recommendation from McNab to W. T. Aiton, Director of the Royal Gardens. He accepted a vacancy in the Royal Forcing Gardens at Kensington Palace, and two years later was transferred to the propagating department at Kew.



The Botanic Garden at Kew, at that time the private property of the Crown, consisted of about nine acres enclosed by walls. The northern part near the Orangery contained the Arboretum, and the remainder was devoted to the herbaceous collection and hothouses. One of the tasks of the young gardeners, who numbered about ten, was to maintain the furnaces in these hothouses, including the

carting of coal and the removal of ashes. Their wages were 12s. a week.

A small wooden door in the Arboretum wall, near the present Main Entrance, provided public access to the Botanic Garden; the entrance to the Pleasure Grounds, which constituted the bulk of the Gardens, lay a little farther along the same wall. These two entrances were abolished when George IV enclosed the western end of Kew Green, and a new imposing gate was substituted about 1825 in the wall near the Director's Office.

When Smith came to Kew, Robert Begbie was foreman, but the following year, 1823, W. T. Aiton decided to put Begbie in charge of the Arboretum and out-of-doors work, and promoted Smith to foreman of the hothouses and propagation department. It thus became Smith's responsibility to tend the rich collections of new plants being sent home by Allan Cunningham and James Bowie from Brazil, South Africa and New South Wales, by Dr. Wallich from India, and David Lockhart from Trinidad. Smith undertook some re-organization of the Gardens in his charge. He records that in 1825, "I began to take special interest in . . . [the Aroids] and found them like the ferns, dispersed in the different hot-houses. I brought them together, forming a group of them at the west end of the hot-house".⁽¹⁾

In 1826 Smith was offered a more lucrative post in Scotland, but W. T. Aiton, being reluctant to lose such a capable employee, consented to the following conditions that Smith proposed: "First, that a certain house conveniently situate to the Garden is to be put in order for me to live in; if it cannot be done, some other house is to be found for me as conveniently situate. And in the second place, my wages is [*sic*] to be at the rate of thirty-one shillings per week, from May last till first May, 1827, when at that date I am to receive at the rate of thirty-four shillings weekly . . ." ⁽²⁾ This agreement was made on 9th September, and Smith with typical Scots caution added that "this engagement had been wrote [*sic*] on paper and signed by Mr. Aiton and me so that no misunderstanding may happen."

About this time Aiton was employed almost exclusively on improvements to the grounds of the Royal Lodge, Windsor Park, and the burden of the routine management of Kew fell upon Smith. He obtained Aiton's permission to re-arrange and name the grass collection, having taken a special interest in grasses since his early days at Edinburgh. "Mr. Aiton was at first adverse to this being done, but ultimately he consented on the understanding that I should be responsible for the correctness of the names, which I readily agreed to. The first consideration as to what kind of labels should be used so as to admit of the specific name, with the initials of the genus before it . . . led to the adoption of labels in the form of the letter T . . . Two sizes were made, one with a broad head for the genus and the other narrow to contain the name of the species. They were made of cast iron, painted white, with the letters in black, and they have since served as the model for all out-

of-door labels ; indeed, the original labels made for the grass collection were still in use in 1864."⁽³⁾ Similar cast iron labels of a smaller size were used for naming the succulents and other greenhouse plants.

George IV died in 1830, and his brother, who became William IV, made a number of changes at Kew. The authority of W. T. Aiton, who, under George IV, had been in charge of all the royal gardens, was restricted to Kew Gardens. This would seem to have been a spiteful retaliation for some offence that Aiton had committed when William IV was Duke of Clarence. The King also restored that portion of Kew Green, which had been enclosed by George IV, to the local parish, and removed the road which ran through the centre of the Green. The northern sector of the Gardens was opened up by demolishing a number of boundary walls. William IV also approved a plan for a new palm house, prepared by Sir Jeffrey Wyattville, and in 1834, a site was actually chosen in his presence, but no further progress was made. Two years later the Aroid house was transferred from Buckingham Palace to Kew. "Much difficulty, however, arose in choosing a site for it, and site after site was marked out for the King's approval, but he would not sanction any of them on account of trees to be cut down. He, therefore, took upon himself to find a place for it and, accordingly fixed, upon the site where the Conservatory No. 1 . . . now stands."⁽⁴⁾

Adequate financial aid and extra staff were not forthcoming from the Lord Steward's Department, and neglect was becoming everywhere apparent. Sir William Hooker, later recalling this period, believed that the state of the Gardens would have been even worse "but for the truly parental affection cherished towards it by Mr. Aiton, and the able exertions of his foreman . . . Mr. Smith." The frequent criticisms of Kew in the horticultural and scientific press compelled the Treasury to appoint an investigating Commission in January, 1838. Referring to the formation of this Commission, which comprised Dr. Lindley, Joseph Paxton and a Mr. Wilson,* J. C. Loudon declared : "Whatever changes may take place, we trust the merits of that modest and unassuming man and thoroughly scientific botanist and gardener, Mr. Smith, will not be forgotten. If Mr. Aiton resigns, which, we trust, he has too much spirit and good sense to do (he having, as we learn, been found altogether blameless), Mr. Smith is, we think, the fittest man in England for the Kew Botanic Garden."⁽⁵⁾

Smith was now the principal foreman with James Templeton as foreman of the Arboretum ; there was a permanent staff of ten labourers with three extra men for the summer months. The Botanic Garden had grown to some 11 acres with 12 greenhouses and the Orangery. The Commission considered the plants in the houses to be reasonably healthy although excessively crowded. They noticed that "a great many plants have been newly labelled, with

* Wilson was gardener to the Earl of Surrey.

their names written on painted sticks, especially in the houses Nos. 2, 5 and 10, but that the principal part of the collection is otherwise unnamed. . . . So far as the mere cultivation of this place is a subject of observation, it is due to those who have charge of it to say, that it does them credit, considering the crowded state of the houses and the inadequate funds allowed for its support. . . . It is impossible to speak of the general management in similar terms . . . ; no kind of arrangement has been observed ; no attempt has been made till lately, to name the multitude of rare plants it comprehends . . . ; no communication is maintained with the Colonies. It is admitted that there is no classification observed in the Garden. What names are to be found in the Garden have been furnished by Mr. Smith, the foreman, and the Director [W. T. Aiton] does not hold himself answerable for them. . . . This most important duty is thrust upon a foreman, paid small weekly wages for cultivating plants, who, whatever his zeal and assiduity may be (and in this case they have been such as to deserve the greatest praise), has no sufficient means of executing such an office."⁽⁶⁾

John Smith denied the accuracy of certain sections of the Commission's Report. "It will be seen by the date of the above Report that the examination of the Garden took place in the month of February, 1838, just after one of the severest winters on record, and heaps of melted snow still lying on the ground, and all evergreen shrubs presenting a sorrowful aspect, and, as the time occupied in examining the Garden, hothouses, collections, and books was only a few hours, such being the case, it could not otherwise be expected that some inaccuracies were the result, and unfavourable impressions formed. For instance, as regards the herbaceous ground, if it had been examined in summer, and time taken, it would have been found to consist of about 2,500 species of perennial plants, arranged according to the Linnaean system, in single rows, with a path between each two, and each genus having its name printed on a large iron label. Besides the grass collection being named as stated in the Report, it would also have been found that the large collection of succulents and other conspicuous plants had their names printed on iron labels."⁽⁷⁾ He also refuted the charge that there had been no adequate communication with the Colonies.

The conclusion reached by the Commission was that if Kew "is relinquished by the Lord Steward, it should either be at once taken for public purposes, gradually made worthy of the country, and converted into a powerful means of promoting national science, or it should be abandoned. It is little better than a waste of money to maintain it in its present state, if it fulfils no intelligible purpose, except that of sheltering a large quantity of rare and valuable plants."⁽⁸⁾

While the future of the Gardens remained uncertain, John Smith was naturally very concerned about his own position. On 5th March, 1838, he wrote to Sir William Hooker at Glasgow University explaining that "Mr. Aiton has not resigned yet, his

anxious wish before he does so is to see me made right, but they have not communicated with him on any subject, therefore I am rather afraid that appointments will be made without them knowing that there is such a person as me. All my years of service never gave me an opportunity of becoming acquainted with official personages, and I am advised to get my friends without delay to speak or write to the Commissioners in my behalf; and I flatter myself that if my humble abilities and years of servitude were fairly made known to them I think I might have no reason to fear another stepping in before me unless it was by some great favouritism. At present, the Commissioners know nothing of me. My botanical friends about London will do what they can for me, and I am sure if you would take the liberty to write them to state what my abilities as a botanist and cultivator are it would weigh greatly in my favour.”⁽⁹⁾ He had already solicited the help of Robert Brown at the British Museum (Natural History) in a letter of 14th February, 1838. “Mr. Aiton tells me and goes so far as to say that if you can do me any good by speaking for me, that you are not to hinder yourself from doing so out of any delicacy to him, and I am sure a word from you will tell greatly to my advantage at this present time, and I believe no time must be lost . . .”⁽¹⁰⁾ Loudon continued to champion Smith in public. “It does not appear to be known at Kew what the intention of government is respecting these gardens, but we do hope that, whatever changes may take place, justice may be done to Mr. Smith, whose modest merit is acknowledged, by every botanist and gardener, to be beyond all praise. If Mr. Aiton should resign, and any other person be appointed to fill his place except Mr. Smith, an act of injustice, and still more of impolicy, will be performed, which it is revolting to the mind to think of. With respect to describing the new plants, Mr. Smith has proved himself, in Hooker and Bauer’s ‘Genera Filicum’, now publishing, as competent to do that as any botanist whatever; but it does not appear to us that government need trouble itself about describing plants at all; it has only to leave the collection open to the examination of all botanists, and provide a clerk for carrying on, under the direction of Mr. Smith, a correspondence with the public botanic gardens, British and Continental.”⁽¹¹⁾

At long last the Government acted, and on 31st March, 1840, transferred the Gardens from the Office of the Lord Steward to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests. On 1st April, the following year, Sir William Jackson Hooker, Professor of Botany at Glasgow University was appointed Director of the Botanic Garden, but W. T. Aiton still retained control of the Pleasure Grounds. In the Autumn of 1841 John Smith was officially appointed Curator at an annual salary of £130 plus a house.

Sir William Hooker was no stranger to Smith who had first met him back in 1832. “My first introduction to Dr., afterwards Sir, W. Hooker, was when I was introduced by Mr. Murray, Curator of the Glasgow Botanic Garden, who had informed me that the Curatorship of the Manchester Garden was then vacant,

and he thought that if I put myself forward, I should become a candidate, and he introduced me to Dr. Hooker, and mentioning the circumstance, he said: 'Oh, I will give him a certificate,' and immediately began to write. I was taken by surprise, and as I knew nothing of the nature of the position, and had an engagement with Mr. Aiton I thought it proper to say, 'I am much obliged to you, but as I have an engagement with Mr. Aiton I can take no steps in the matter till I have consulted with him.' He said 'Quite right,' and drew the pen through what he had written. As he knew nothing of me before this, the circumstances led me to think him a hasty but well-meaning gentleman."⁽¹²⁾ Shortly following this brief encounter Smith entered into a correspondence with Sir William Hooker concerning their mutual interest in ferns.

One of the principal recommendations of the Lindley Commission proposed that the Gardens "should be enlarged by the increase of at least 30 acres from the pleasure grounds of Kew." This Sir William Hooker achieved in 1843 by the transfer of 45 acres; two years later, on the retirement of W. T. Aiton, he acquired the remainder of the Pleasure Grounds and the Old Deer Park. Having extended the Gardens, Sir William now desperately needed more glasshouses. The desirability of a new palm house was again raised and, according to Smith, "Sir Jeffrey Wyattville's plan and the site having been approved by Sir William Hooker, it was submitted to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests for their approval and grant for its erection. It was estimated to cost £10,000. The Commissioners, however, thought proper to place the matter in the hands of a different architect, and Decimus Burton was chosen who, as might be expected, set aside Sir Jeffrey Wyattville's plan and site, and submitted a plan of his own, which being approved by the Commissioners, he was instructed to choose a site for it in the new Ground. On his coming to Kew, he had not been more than half an hour in the Grounds when he fixed upon the site where it now stands. Being present, I thought it my duty to say it would never do here, for where we now stand is a bog the greater part of the year, and water was always to be found within a few feet of the surface. He said, 'Oh, we will make that all right.' I may here mention that my objection to this site was that it was the lowest ground in the Parish of Kew, and consisted originally of lagoons and swamps connected with the Thames. George III took advantage of these lagoons and converted them into a lake which, after the King's illness and removal to Windsor, was neglected, and in 1812 filled up, the only part left being now ornamental water lying between the Palm House and Museum. . . . On the 4th April [1844] Mr. Burton sent his assistant to make the exact site, as regards length and width of the house; this being my last opportunity, I strongly protested against its position."⁽¹³⁾ Smith was subsequently reprimanded by Sir William for interfering in a matter outside his jurisdiction. Smith's defence was his fear of the probable flooding of the furnaces below the Palm House. (This actually occurred and proved troublesome to rectify.) Asked

where he would put the Palm House Smith "accordingly made a plan showing a grand walk extending from the Orangery to the Pagoda, the tropical house, that is the Palm House, on one side, and a temperate house, expected to be erected at some future time, on the other side, the site being on the high ground including the part marked out for the Palm House in King William's reign. . . . Shortly after this Sir W. Hooker requested me to accompany him to Mr. Burton's office in London for the purpose of seeing the design and plans of the intended new Palm House. The plan consisted of a curvilinear structure similar to the Duke of Devonshire's house at Chatsworth, the profile having an imposing appearance, with which Sir W. Hooker was much pleased. I, however, was more concerned about the interior, and, on examination, I found that there were so many pillars and they were so close together that there would not be room for the full expansion of the leaves of the large palms. On my calling attention to this, Sir W. Hooker was of the same opinion, and on calling Mr. Burton's attention to it he said he would try another way. With this our interview ended. About this time Mr. Richard Turner of the Hammer-smith Iron Works, Dublin, having heard of the intended erection of a large hothouse at Kew, came over to see about it, and having obtained an introduction to the Commissioners of Works they requested him to furnish a plan and estimate for an iron structure in conjunction with Mr. Burton, which he obligingly did. On his informing me of this, I said, 'I hope you will not have so many pillars in the centre as in Mr. Burton's plan.' 'Oh, no, he said, and took a piece of paper, and drew a pen and ink profile of the Palm House as it was to be erected, being quite different from Mr. Burton's plan, having no pillars in the centre.'⁽¹⁴⁾ This claim that Turner was the real designer of the Palm House is supported by a letter from T. Drew in the "Building News" for 19th March, 1880. According to Mr. Drew, Richard Turner was allowed at his own risk and expense to submit a full size portion of the structure, which was tested and approved in the yard of Messrs. Grissel and Peto. Indeed, the Palm house has the functional simplicity one would expect from an engineer. Decimus Burton's conception of a glasshouse is demonstrated in the heavy and ornate Temperate House.

When John Smith arrived at Kew in 1822 there were no books provided for the instruction of the gardeners, who learnt their craft entirely by practical experience and observation. "As for elementary books on gardening and botany they had none. I, on first coming to Kew, was considered wonderful on account of possessing three books, viz. Maw's 'Gardeners' Calendar', Lee's 'Introduction to Botany', and Smith's 'Compendium Florae Britannica'."⁽¹⁵⁾ Soon after Sir William Hooker's appointment in 1841, a library was established for the use of the young gardeners. This was later supported by a regular series of lectures, and the student gardeners were encouraged to sit simple examinations. In 1850 John Smith "tried a direct test by offering as a prize a copy of Hooker's

'British Flora' for the best collection of dried British plants collected in the neighbourhood. . . . Four collections were put in for competition. . . . The prize was awarded to Charles Baxter, the afterwards indefatigable but unfortunate African collector."⁽¹⁶⁾ W. Botting Hemsley, who knew Smith, said that "he encouraged by word and deed such young men as were really industrious and persevering".⁽¹⁷⁾

In 1847 Sir William Hooker created the nucleus of a museum of economic botany in the old fruit store which stood in the former Royal Kitchen Garden. He contributed specimens from his own collection which he had used in his lectures at Glasgow University. Smith also added pine cones, capsular fruits and samples of wood. His son, Alexander Smith, then 14 years old, was allowed to arrange these specimens, and in June, 1847, was officially engaged to look after the collection. In 1856 he became Curator of the Museum, and accompanied Sir William to the Paris Exhibition to select and purchase new material. The following year found him busy organizing the new museum facing the Pond, but, unfortunately, a severe illness compelled him to resign in 1858. After a long convalescence he was re-instated in May, 1864, as a clerk in the Herbarium, but his ill-health persisted and he died on 16th May, 1865, at the age of 33 years. He had obviously inherited his father's capacity for hard, sustained work; during his short life he was a contributor to the "Journal of Botany", Moore and Lindley's "Treasury of Botany", and Markham's "Travels in Peru and India," and on his death left 30 volumes of notes on economic botany.

In 1855 Dr. (afterwards Sir) Joseph Dalton Hooker was made Assistant Director to his father. John Smith strongly objected to what he considered was Dr. Hooker's interference in horticultural matters, about which he thought Dr. Hooker knew very little. This resentment probably distorted his recollections of events after that date. Smith claimed that the former policy of conserving plants then "began to waver, and in time changed to a destructive policy, the first act of which was to cut down the climbers which occupied the whole of the staircase pillars and gallery rails, thus leaving the iron work as bare as it was left by the Architects. . . . Sir William and Dr. Hooker took it into their heads to destroy many old specimen plants, which since their accommodation in the Palm House, had become the pride of the house, for which no reason was given, and it appeared to me nothing but wanton mischief. These destructions took place at three different times. . . . The mode of proceeding was, Sir W. Hooker would fix his eye on a plant, ask its history, then say, 'Away with it.' And in a moment the foreman's big knife made the bark hang in ribbons. This was the signal for the men to break it up, and convey it, and the box in which it was grown to the rubbish yard, Plant after plant followed by the same way with apparently as much indifference as if they had been common laurels."⁽¹⁸⁾

On distressing occasions like these Smith probably sought consolation in the study of ferns, his constant interest since 1823, when he was put in charge of them at Kew. The collection then comprised about 40 hardy species, British and foreign, and about the same number of tender exotics. New species were added, many from spores obtained from collections of dried specimens. By 1845 the collection had increased to some 400 species and was described by Smith in the "Botanical Magazine" (1846). This was the first publication of any list of plants at Kew since the second edition of Aiton's "Hortus Kewensis" in 1813. In 1829 Smith established the nucleus of his personal fern herbarium with a collection of Indian ferns presented by Dr. Wallich. To these was added Robert Heward's Jamaican ferns, and in 1841 the ferns collected in the Philippines by Hugh Cuming. On a visit to Kew in 1836 Sir William Hooker saw the aged Francis Bauer engaged on illustrating the fructification of ferns. Impressed with the drawings, he conceived the idea of publishing them, and urged Bauer to continue. Smith, afterwards learning of their proposed publication, wrote to Sir William. "Mr. Bauer tells me that you will be glad to receive any note which I may have to say upon them. I, accordingly, send you part of what I have done, which will show you my manner of arranging the genera, which I did last winter merely to assist me in arranging my specimens, as I was not pleased with any arrangement I had seen. But I have not had the opportunity of consulting many books; on that account, it is not so perfect as I could yet desire."⁽¹⁹⁾ This was the first of an exchange of letters between Smith and Hooker from which one learns that Smith was largely responsible for selecting the material for Bauer to draw. The drawings were published in parts during 1838 to 1842 under the title of "Genera Filicum", and to it Smith contributed descriptions of 20 new genera. In 1840 he presented a paper to the Linnean Society outlining a new classification of ferns. It was subsequently published in instalments in "Hooker's Journal of Botany", 1841 to 1843, as "An Arrangement and definition of the genera of ferns." According to J. G. Baker, "his primary divisions, *Dermobrya* and *Eremobrya*, were original, but in his idea of founding genera on venation, he was anticipated by Presl, whose 'Tentamen Pteridographia' appeared in 1836."⁽²⁰⁾ He named Schomburgk's ferns of British Guiana, published in "Hooker's Journal of Botany" (1842), and assisted J. D. Hooker in the identification of the ferns in his 'Flora Novae Zelandiae' (1855). He also enumerated the ferns collected during the voyage of 'H.M.S. Herald' in Seemann's "Botany of 'H.M.S. Herald'" (1852-7). In 1857 he produced a revised list of the fern collection at Kew, then considered one of the finest in cultivation. Sir William Hooker in the preface to his "Synopsis Filicum", acknowledged that the formation of the fernery was "mainly due to the exertions and ability of Mr. John Smith."

For some years Smith had been troubled by failing eyesight, which eventually compelled him to resign the Curatorship of the

Royal Botanic Gardens in May, 1864, after 42 years' service. Although now totally blind, he continued to write with the assistance of a young woman secretary. In 1866 another catalogue of the ferns in the Kew collection appeared: "Ferns, British and Foreign." It described 164 genera and enumerated 1,084 species. His last work on ferns, "Historia Filicum," was published in 1875. In his day Smith's renown as a pteridologist was overshadowed by the greater reputation of Sir William Hooker. Copeland thought that "Smith knew his ferns as living things . . . and his judgments were entitled to a respect they have never received."⁽²¹⁾ At last there is some slight recognition of his abilities. "His work was overlooked for many years but it is now generally admitted that his ideas were sound and that he was really a pioneer of modern pteridology."⁽²²⁾

In August, 1865, Smith circulated a printed brochure announcing the sale of his herbarium. He described it as containing about 5,000 species of flowering plants, of which more than 3,000 had been in cultivation at Kew during 1824 to 1844. His most valuable collection, however, was his fern herbarium of approximately 2,000 species, which was bought by the British Museum (Natural History) in 1866. The opportunity for its purchase was first given to Kew, but declined because of the difference in the sizes of mounting paper used by Smith and Kew. The British Museum also acquired at least part of his collection of phanerogams.⁽²³⁾

"Domestic botany" emerged in 1871 as a result of sifting Alexander Smith's vast accumulation of manuscript notes on economic botany. Six years later, "Bible plants, their history" appeared, and relying on his retentive memory of long years at Kew, he published, "Record of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew," in 1880. This valuable account of the Gardens during the first half of the nineteenth century, like his unpublished history of Kew, contains a number of tendentious statements. Yet another work, "Dictionary of popular names of economic plants", came out in 1882. On the 12th February, 1888, in his 90th year, he died and was buried in the south-east corner of St. Anne's churchyard on Kew Green, beside his wife and six children.

John Smith was completely dedicated to his chosen profession, but his inclinations lay rather with botany than gardening. His competence as a botanist received some public acknowledgment. In 1837 he was elected an Associate of the Linnean Society; in 1853 he was chosen a Member of the Cesareae Leopoldina-Carolinae Academiae Naturae Curiosum, adopting the academical name of the late celebrated pteridologist, 'Kunze'; and he became a Corresponding Member of the Société Cryptogamologique Italienne in 1878. At Kew, where he was known as 'Old Jock', respect rather than affection was his due. J. W. Thomson, another Kewite, declared that he "was an uncompromising stickler for the rules, which accounted, perhaps, for his unpopularity."⁽²⁴⁾ W. Botting Hemsley, on his first arrival at Kew in September, 1860, remembered finding "Mr. Smith, or 'Old Jock' as he was generally

called, seated in a small dark room, with a shade over his eyes, for already the premonitory symptoms were upon him of the perpetual darkness which soon followed. He questioned me as to what I could do in short, jerky sentences, and with an accent quite new to me; and he was evidently amused at my botanical aspirations. Nevertheless, he was exceedingly kind, though rather abrupt in his manner."⁽²⁵⁾ Botting Hemsley, however, confessed that John Smith "was not of a sympathetic nature" since "he required no relaxation himself . . . and gauged other people's wants by his own."⁽²⁶⁾ Despite the defects of his personality, John Smith was not a mean or petty man. He served Kew well during its critical and formative years, and it is hoped that this brief appreciation will help to establish him in his rightful position in the history of the Gardens.

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OPENING OF LIVERPOOL BOTANIC GARDEN
18th SEPTEMBER, 1964.

Address by Sir George Taylor, Director of Kew.

MY LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN, COUNCILLORS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

It was with particular pleasure that I accepted the invitation to come to Liverpool to-day, because for many years I have watched with admiration the progress of botanical and horticultural affairs in this remarkable city. There are few Municipalities with so proud and honourable a record in the pursuit of knowledge of plants which will grow within their boundaries. I am, in this context, deeply sensible of the honour you do me in inviting me here on an occasion which is a major landmark in the history of botany and horticulture in Liverpool.

This is not, however, the only reason for my personal pleasure on this occasion. As Director of Kew, I take particular pride in the fact that Mr. Conn, the Director of your Parks and Gardens Department, was trained at Kew and is what those who work at Kew term "An Old Kewite", and he is now President-elect of the Kew Guild. As one "Kewite" to another, I congratulate him on the example he has shown to those young men from the Liverpool Parks Department who come down, with great regularity, for training on our student gardeners course at Kew. I am sure that to-day he is seeing the realization of his botanical and horticultural ambitions and is a very proud and happy man. He will, I am certain, not mind in the least if, by virtue of Kew association, I claim a share in his pride at the achievement now before us.

There is another reason also for personal pleasure on this occasion. I have had much to do in my time with the organisation of plant-collecting expeditions and with the distribution of collections resulting from them. I have been very greatly impressed by the enlightened attitude of your city in supporting these expeditions, such as those of my friend, the late Frank Kingdon-Ward, who made an outstanding contribution to the store of fine garden plants which will grow in these Islands. Plant-collecting expeditions cannot take place without backing. The City of Liverpool may well take great pride in the fact that it gave such support to expeditions which have permanently enriched our British gardens including this one.

There is yet another reason for my personal satisfaction at being here today. As a member of the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society, and I am sure Mr. Gilmour another member present will agree with me, it has given me great pleasure to see the admirable display which, from time to time, the Parks and Gardens Department has put up at the Society's Shows. You have your own great Shows in Lancashire but you are not content with this. You come down to London and beat all-comers on what is for many their home ground! The City of Liverpool displays have reflected great