



**Important Aytonians**

**William Mudd  
(1829-1879)**

**The Father of British Lichenology**

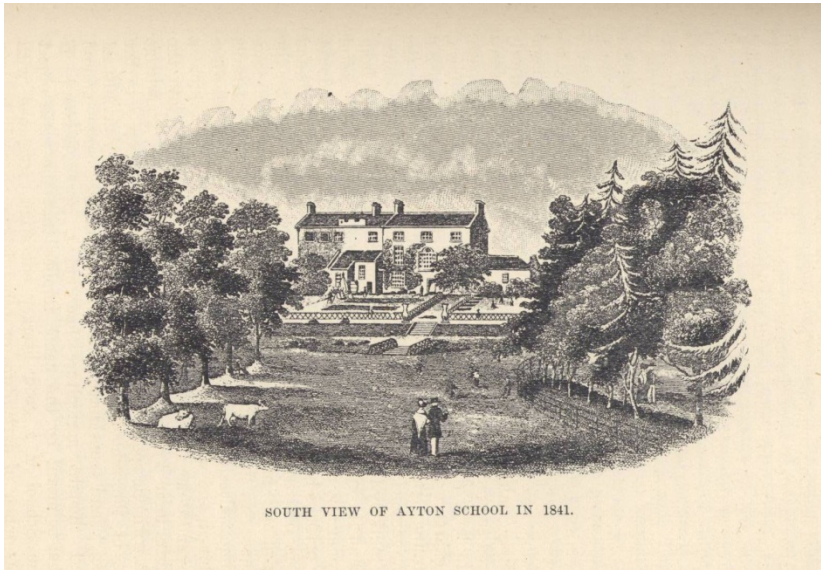
William Mudd was born in 1829 at Clifton Lodge (above) near Bedale, where his father was a steward.

When he was aged 20, he married Jane Preston, a servant from Durham. They had four sons and one daughter. Their first son was born at Darlington, their other children were born in Great Ayton.



William trained as a gardener at Joseph Pease's house at South End in Darlington.

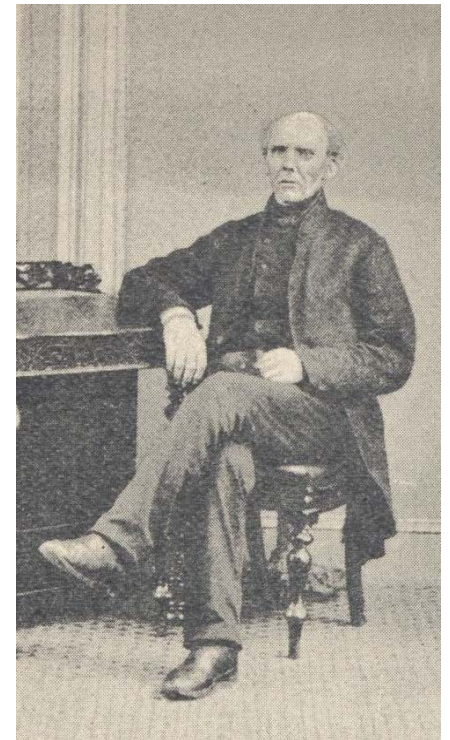
He was then appointed head gardener for John Pease at Cleveland Lodge (left) in Great Ayton. Cleveland Lodge was built by Thomas Richardson in 1843 and was later inherited by John Pease in 1853.



The Quaker School in Great Ayton opened in 1841 to educate the children of Quakers who had “married out” by marrying a non-Quaker.

George Dixon (right) was the first superintendent of the Quaker School. He started a botanical class in the village for local residents.

William Mudd joined the class and took a particular interest in the study of lichens.



A lichen is produced by a mutually-beneficial relationship between a fungus and an alga. The delicate alga is green and makes food by photosynthesis, whilst the fungus provides anchorage and protection.



*Collema immixtum* Ach  
G. Mudd 1427

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HAB. Sandy banks  
LOCAL. near Howbery  
COL. W Mudd  
DATE 7 Mo. 18 54 GEO. DIXON,  
AYTON, NR. STOKESLEY, YORKSHIRE.

In his history of the Ayton School, published in 1891, George Dixon wrote of William Mudd “By a student’s microscope, he discovered that the spores of different species varied, and classified them accordingly.” The label (left) shows one of William Mudd’s specimens.

William Mudd was a keen naturalist and went on field trips to collect specimens. One of these was in Weardale , where it was said of him that “all day long (Mudd) was busy chipping off fragments of lichen-covered rock, which were duly deposited in bags slung round his person; when the other gentlemen retired for the night, they left Mr. Mudd still chipping and dressing his specimens, and in the morning as soon as they awoke, they heard the chip of Mr. Mudd’s hammer already at work”



*Solenopsora candicans*  
Crustiose lichen on limestone  
Yorkshire Dales National Park

By the end of this field trip, William had collected many specimens. “After breakfast, they walked over Swinhope Fell and caught the morning coach at Westgate for Frosterley, which was then the terminus of the line; on arriving at the station, Mr. Mudd’s bags were overhauled by one of the porters, who said Mr. Mudd would have to pay for ‘excess luggage’; the party protested against this, and said it was impossible that the bags could be so heavy, as Mr. Mudd had carried them from High Force over Swinhope to Westgate however, the load was placed on the scales, and it weighed over eight stones.”

*Excerpts from Walks in Weardale, W H Smith, 1885*

William Mudd became an acknowledged expert on British lichens at home and abroad.

His first published paper, in the *Phytologist* No 5, 1854, was *An Account of the lichens of Cleveland, with their localities*. In 1861 he published *Herbarium Lichenum britannicorum*, the first comprehensive manual of British lichen flora, with 130 illustrations drawn by William himself. This was followed in 1865 by *A Monograph of British Cladoniae* illustrated with dried specimens of eighty species and varieties.

Professor Mark Seaward, University of Bradford, says that “As a result of Mudd’s labours, the number of lichen species known from Yorkshire rose from about 300 in 1850 to more than 480 in 1862”.

There are collections of William Mudd’s material in:

The British Museum (Natural History) in London

The Hancock Museum in Newcastle

The Falconer Museum at Forres in Scotland

In 1864, when he was 35, William was appointed curator of the Cambridge Botanic Garden (right) and the family moved to Cambridge.

With his rural ways and lack of formal education, William found life in Cambridge very difficult. Some of his fellows did not think too highly of him ...



“An illiterate Scotchman who smoked very strong tobacco and smelt strongly of whisky”

Alfred Maudsley (1850-1931) archaeologist, Harrow School and Trinity Hall, Cambridge

“A tall man, well-built and bony, but thin; his complexion was dark, his hair long and black. He was of a nervous, active temperament, with strong religious susceptibilities, and, as all such natures are, subject to melancholy and depression.”

W Johnson in *Nature and Naturalists* 1903



William's life ended in sadness. In addition to his difficulties in fitting-in at Cambridge, his eyesight was failing. The Secretary of the Pharmaceutical Society visited William Mudd at Cambridge and said "I wrote you some time since, but received no reply."

William answered "Whenever I get a letter on lichens I put it on the fire, because the doctor told me that if I continued to use the microscope I should lose my eyesight."

William Mudd died at his home, after a short illness, in April 1879, just a few days before his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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