Johann Christian Breutel (1788 – 1875)

Born on 21 January 1788 in Weissenburg, Middle Franconia, Bavaria (Bayern), Germany, Johann Wilhelm Breutel was the only son of master tailor Johann Christian Breutel and his wife Maria Margaretha, née Winkelmayer. After his primary school education in Ebersdorf, Saxony, and probably pressure on his parents by local brethren, he joined the Moravians in 1799 to learn the trade of glovemaking. His friendship with the apothecary's apprentice Aschenbach led to his interest in botany. However, he finished his training in 1814, remained with the brothers, and as an ordained deacon of the Moravian Church, served at Gnadenfrei (Silesia) from 1814 to 1819 and then at Neuwied (The Rhineland) until 1824.

On a trip to Switzerland in the spring of 1824 he met Sophie Röederer at Thun, and in September that year they married. Their first son Carl Julius, born in 1826, was followed by John William (1828), Francis William (1830), Emil (1832) and daughter Marie in 1835. After his transfer to Niesky (now Legnica in southwestern Poland), Breutel rose rapidly through the church hierarchy, and as a member of the board of directors, served at Berthelsdorf, near Herrnhut (Saxony), which became the centre of the worldwide Moravian Church (United Brethren). He visited other communities in Europe and made extended journeys abroad to mission stations in the West Indies (St Thomas, St Croix, St John, St Kitts and Antigua) 1840–41, and South Africa 1853–54. The main purpose of the schools was to teach the children of Negro slaves the English language and Protestant dogma. In St John he also visited the grave of his much-loved sister amidst those of other victims of "muskito"- spread tropical fever. In 1853 he was appointed bishop of the Moravian Church.

Side by side with his religious commitments (but less well documented) were his botanical pursuits, encouraged by Bishop Johann Baptist von Albertini, an expert on the local flora of Lautisz (Lusatia), a mountain and marshland region straddling the borders of Germany and Poland. Albertini specialised in the fungi; Breutel devoted himself mainly to mosses, and made contact with pharmacist and bryologist Heinrich Christian Funck (1771–1839) in Geffres (Upper Franconia) and Christian Gottfried Daniel Nees von Esenbeck (1776–1858), president of the German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina. One of Breutel's discoveries was the rare "millimetre" moss, *Micromitrium tenerum.* With his wife, he collected mosses, liverworts, algae, lichen and ferns on his missionary trips, and a report of his journey to the West Indies was published in *Flora* 25, 11:549-560. His moss collections, and those collected for him in Greenland and Labrador by members of the brotherhood, were sent to the French bryologist Wilhelm Philippe Schimper (1808–1880), director of the Natural History Museum in Strasbourg, for identification. Many, including the genus *Breutelia* (1856), were subsequently named after him.

Increasing health problems, including loss of hearing, necessitated his retirement from office in 1857. He suffered a stroke and died at Herrnhut on 18 February 1875. His specimens are scattered in several European herbaria, with a large moss collection in the British Museum. As well as his collections, his in-depth observations contributed significantly to the knowledge of bryology in the first half of the 19th century.

Breutelia pendula

Breutelia is a genus of moss in the family Bartramiaceae. It has a worldwide distribution, and contains about 200 species. Male plants form conspicuous brown discs at the ends of the branches. *Breutelia pendula* is common in roadside ditches, at the base of damp banks or rock faces, or in boggy ground, where it forms yellow-brown patches. It occurs in Australia and New Zealand, including the subantarctic islands of Campbell, the Aucklands, Antipodes and Macquarie. Collected by Archibald Menzies in 1791 at Dusky Sound, New Zealand, it was described as *Minimum pendulum* by the English botanist James Edward Smith (1759-1828) in 1804. More than half a century later, in 1856, Philipp Bruch and Wilhelm Philippe Schimper proposed a new genus, *Breutelia*.