

Arthur Dendy (1865 – 1925)

Arthur Dendy was born on 20 January 1865 at Patricroft, near Manchester, England, the son of the Reverend John Dendy, a non-conformist minister and later silk manufacturer, and his wife Sarah, née Beard. Arthur, the eighth of their nine children, was educated at Manchester Grammar School and Owens College, Victoria University, Manchester. After graduating in 1885 with an honours degree in zoology (MSc 1887; DSc 1891) he was employed at the British Natural History Museum to work on marine sponges collected on the *Challenger* expedition (1872–1876) and a collection from Port Phillip Bay, Victoria, Australia.

In 1888 he was appointed demonstrator and assistant lecturer in biology at the University of Melbourne. In December that year he married Ada Margaret Courtauld, who had followed him out from England; they were to have three daughters and a son. Dendy joined the Royal Society and the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. He undertook the identification and description of nearly 2000 specimens of sponges from near Port Phillip Heads, and his ten major papers, in which he described 87 new species, led to a complete revision of the sponge phylum, on which he became a world authority. Systematically researching the cryptic terrestrial invertebrate fauna of Victoria, he coined the term cryptozoa to describe light-abhorring animals found under logs or stones. He also co-authored with A H S Lucas (1853-1936) *An Introduction to the Study of Botany* (1892).

In 1893 Dendy was appointed lecturer in biology at Canterbury College, Christchurch, New Zealand, and

in 1894 he succeeded F W Hutton as professor when the latter became curator of the Canterbury Museum. An active member of the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury (president 1895–1896; secretary 1897–1901), he often made presentations on his special interests, which included sponges, land planarians, the tuatara, peripatus, the Moriori – and botany. He lived on a 20-acre block on the Cashmere hills and became a close friend of botanist Leonard Cockayne; they collected plants together and in 1900 contributed articles to a Canterbury Jubilee souvenir publication. Arnold Wall, who arrived at Christchurch in 1899 to take up the chair of English language and literature at Canterbury College, became another good friend, and in about 1902 they made a trip to Milford Sound on the then unfinished track.

Dendy visited England in 1902, but resigned in January 1903 after being appointed professor of zoology at the South African College, Capetown. Two years later he became professor of zoology at King's College, London. In 1906 he was elected an honorary member of the New Zealand Institute, and in 1908 a fellow of the Linnean Society, London. Following an operation for chronic appendicitis, he died on 24 March 1925 at King's College Hospital, London.

In 1898 Christchurch bootmaker-botanist Robert Brown named the moss genus *Dendia* in his honour, with the species *maritima* "from its being found growing close to the sea". Cockayne described and named a new alpine species *Cotula dendyi* (now *Leptinella dendyi*) after his friend, but the name was in use for many years before its formal publication in 1915.



Leptinella dendyi

Leptinella (in the Asteraceae or daisy family) is a genus of some 33 species from New Zealand, New Guinea, Australia and southern South America, formerly included in *Cotula* but reinstated in 1987. One of 17 species native to New Zealand, *Leptinella dendyi* is a fleshy creeping alpine herb of mobile, sparsely vegetated scree from eastern Nelson and Marlborough south to Canterbury. Once considered a variety of *Leptinella atrata*, it differs mainly in its larger flower heads which are flattened, not convex, and up to 2 cm diameter. Unopened flower heads are deep maroon, and the florets yellow when open, but have also been described and photographed as a drab khaki. The surrounding bracts are shorter than the florets.

PHOTO: David Lyttle