

ACC
ART
BOOKS

Royal
Botanic
Gardens **Kew**



THE ART OF BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION

THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is a world-famous scientific organisation, internationally respected for its outstanding collections as well as its scientific expertise in plant and fungal diversity, conservation and sustainable development in the UK and around the world.

Kew Gardens is a major international and a top London visitor attraction: together, the Kew and Wakehurst botanic gardens attract over 2.5 million visits every year. In 2019, Kew celebrated its 260th anniversary; its 132 hectares of landscaped gardens make a significant contribution to the study of plant diversity and economic botany and as such it has been a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site since July 2003. Wakehurst is Kew's wild botanic garden in Sussex, home to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank, the largest wild plant seed bank in the world, as well as over 500 acres of designed landscapes, wild woodlands, ornamental gardens and a nature reserve.

Kew's mission is to understand and protect plants and fungi, for the wellbeing of people and the future of all life on Earth. Its aspiration is to end the extinction crisis and help create a world where nature and biodiversity are protected, valued and managed sustainably.

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Professor William T. Stearn (1911-2001), co-author of *The Art of Botanical Illustration* was an Honorary Research Associate of Kew, making his first visit to the Kew Herbarium and Library in 1930 for research on the genus *Epimedium*.



Fritillaria raddeana by Rory McEwen (1977)

FOREWORD TO THE 2021 EDITION

M A R T Y N R I X

Ever since its first publication in the New Naturalist series in 1950, *The Art of Botanical Illustration* has remained the classic source book on the history of botanical painting and fine illustrated botanical books. It combines the good taste and wide-ranging experience of Wilfrid Blunt, for many years art master at Eton College, with the youthful erudition of William Stearn, librarian at the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society.

The first edition covered the history of botanical illustration from flowers drawn on Mycenaean pots and in Byzantine herbals, to the main botanical artists working in the first half of the 20th century. When about nine years old, and attempting to draw wildflowers, I saw a copy of *The Art of Botanical Illustration* on a low shelf in a bookshop among the other botanical books; I opened it, but disappointed that it was not an instruction manual, replaced it on the shelf. Had I turned to the back of the book, I would have found reprinted from *The Gardeners' Chronicle* of 1869, a clear exposition by W.H. Fitch of how to draw stems, leaves and flowers in perspective and a short account by Stella Ross-Craig of her methods of botanical illustration; Fitch was renowned for the speed at which he worked and his sureness of line, Ross-Craig for the clarity of her pen-and-ink drawings, though she was a fine water-colourist as well. Their two accounts, combined with study of the numerous illustrations in the book, are more than sufficient for any aspiring botanical artist.

Wilfrid Blunt taught art at Eton from 1932 to 1959, and among his pupils were two boys who became successful but very different artists in later life: Sir Howard Hodgkin (painter of bold abstracts) and Rory McEwen. McEwen acknowledged Blunt's

influence in showing him the work of 17th-century botanical artists such as Nicolas Robert. Blunt's Preface to the first edition acknowledges William Stearn's considerable help in the completion and accuracy of the first edition, and the new edition – revised and enlarged by Stearn after Blunt's death – appeared in 1994 under both their names. Stearn's introduction to the new edition, reprinted here, gives details of Wilfrid Blunt's life and career, but, of course, says nothing about his own remarkable, long and immensely fruitful life.

William Stearn was born near Cambridge in 1911 and won a scholarship to Cambridge Boys' High School. His father died when he was eleven, and the family could not afford to send him to the university, so after school he started work in Bowes & Bowes Bookshop at 1 Trinity Street. Due to his great interest in botany, he made friends such as John Gilmour and Tom Tutin in the Botany School and was allowed to study the herbarium and in the library in his spare time. One of his first published papers, in 1930, was the description of a new onion, *Allium farreri*, collected in Gansu. From Cambridge he was recommended to the Royal Horticultural Society and worked in the library from 1930 to 1952; as a Quaker, he was excused active fighting and served from 1941 to 1946 in the RAF as an intelligence officer in India and Burma, where his interest in the Himalayan flora was re-awakened. In 1952 he moved to the Natural History Museum in South Kensington as a taxonomist working on a wide range of different floras, until his retirement in 1976. From then until his death in 2001, he was a familiar figure in Kew, at the Royal

Horticultural Society and at the Linnean Society, all the homes of old libraries and large collections of unpublished botanical drawings. During this period, he produced many fine publications and was always a generous and erudite advisor on all things botanical and bibliographical. One of the many illustrated books he wrote (with an introduction by Blunt) was the Basilisk Press limited edition *The Australian Flower Paintings of Ferdinand Bauer* (1976), which published for the first time some of Ferdinand Bauer's work held in the Natural History Museum, done from sketches made during Flinders' first circumnavigation of Australia in 1801–1803. Like Blunt, Stearn inspired a generation of those who understood his intellectual interests and he never lost his youthful enthusiasm; in hospital during his final days, he was thrilled by a bunch of Chinese *Epimedium* 'much bigger than I had thought possible – we must change the measurements in the monograph' as well as an award of another honorary doctorate. His areas of expertise embraced nearly all aspects of botany, botanical books and botanical illustration; as his *Times* obituary said, 'he was acknowledged as the greatest botanical authority of the twentieth century'.

The 1994 edition of this book, revised by Stearn alone after the death of Blunt, provided an opportunity to include many more illustrations by contemporary artists, particularly those working in South Africa, where a great tradition continues today, and gave the opportunity to show some of the paintings of Margaret Mee, and other artists whose work came after 1950.

In the years since 1994, there has been a considerable renaissance in botanical painting, sometimes for publication, but often as an art form in itself. New institutions and botanical art societies have sprung up, and many of the old ones are still influential. The institution with the greatest influence on botanical art and illustration has been the Royal Horticultural Society, which has encouraged artists from all over the world to bring their work to London for judging; in recent years there has been a dedicated botanical art show each year. In America, the ASBA has a similar role, and exhibitions at the Hunt-Mellon

Institute in Pittsburgh have encouraged artists from all over the world to show their work.

These exhibitions have emphasised the large number of very talented botanical artists now working in Japan and Korea. The fusion of Japanese and European styles of painting has produced exceptionally beautiful work. Their inspiration comes partly from Japanese artists such as Kawahara Keiga (fl. 1820s), whose work was hidden for many years in the Komarov Botanical Institute in St Petersburg, and Tomitaro Makino (1862–1957), whose skill as a draughtsman was unequalled, and at the same time was one of Japan's foremost botanical taxonomists; his work is becoming more widely known and is now preserved in the Kochi Makino Botanical Garden. An exhibition of paintings by forty Japanese artists, curated by Masumi Yamanaka, was held at Kew in 2016. Some of the work of Mieko Ishikawa in particular is inspired by Makino's detailed botanical studies. These recent Japanese artists' paintings are in a more European style, and many have been published in Europe and in America, where the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation in Pittsburgh has been instrumental in making the work of both Japanese and Indian artists more widely known.

In the last thirty years no one individual has done more to further the cause of botanical art and illustration than Dr Shirley Sherwood. She has had immense influence, both in supporting artists by building up her own collection, and by organising seminars and tutorials around the world. She and her family funded the Shirley Sherwood Gallery in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew as a place for exhibitions of botanical art. She has used the gallery to exhibit her own collection and other aspects of botanical art. In a survey she made about who among contemporary artists had influenced their painting, more than half those represented in the Sherwood collection named Rory McEwen as an inspirational figure. An exhibition of his life and work in the Shirley Sherwood Gallery at Kew in 2013 emphasised how original were his ideas and how brilliant was his technique.

Despite the rise of digital photography, botanical painting and drawing for scientific illustration has retained its importance in showing the details of



True Facts from Nature (sycamore leaf), by Rory McEwen (1973).

plants. Original artwork is still commissioned from around the world for *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, the subject of a chapter in Blunt's first edition, and still published quarterly. There are several regular prizes for scientific botanical illustration, for example the American Society of Botanical Artists' biennial award for excellence in scientific botanical art; the Margaret Flockton Award given by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, for 'excellence in scientific botanical illustration'; and the Jill Smythies Award, presented by the Linnean Society in London 'for

excellence in published botanical illustrations which contribute to plant identification'.

It would no doubt delight both Blunt and Stearn to know that their work has played such a valuable role in the continuing importance of the art of botanical illustration, and that their book is being reissued more than seventy years after its initial publication.

Martyn Rix
Editor, *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*
November 2020



Maxillaria orchid by Margaret Mee. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1994 EDITION

W I L L I A M T . S T E A R N

In 1945 *The New Naturalist* series of books on British natural history, written by experts, profusely illustrated and intended for general reading, began publication with the issue of E.B. Ford's *Butterflies*. About 1946 the Editors decided that a pleasing and useful addition to the series would be a volume on botanical illustration, presumably with special emphasis on the portrayal of British plants. They soon realised that this would result in a lop-sided, somewhat misleading and insular survey of a great internationally interwoven subject; its coverage had to be much more comprehensive. One *New Naturalist* Editor asked me to undertake this volume as I was known to have given much study to the history of botanical illustration and had already published since 1937 fifteen bibliographical papers on illustrated botanical books. Another Editor asked Wilfrid Blunt, art master at Eton College, to write the same book! At the time, as Blunt wrote later with characteristic honesty, he "had no qualifications whatever for undertaking it beyond a fondness for flowers." Neither of us then knew of the other's existence. The embarrassed Editors suggested that we should co-operate. Blunt came to the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society, of which I was then the Librarian, and we agreed on joint action. He was an unmarried art master with no marking of classwork to occupy his evenings; moreover he had long holidays and ample time and money to visit public collections in Holland, France and Italy; I, on the other hand, was a busy librarian with no such facilities and already engaged in gathering material for my *Botanical Latin* and bibliographical papers. We accordingly decided that he should write the book and that I should later revise and augment it. Thus began an amicable collaboration, not only on *The Art of Botanical Illustration* (1950) but

also on *The Compleat Naturalist, a Life of Linnaeus* (1971), *Captain Cook's Florilegium* (1973) and *The Australian Flower Paintings of Ferdinand Bauer* (1976), and a mutually valued friendship which lasted up to Blunt's death on 8 January 1987.

The resulting *The Art of Botanical Illustration* (1950) was a much better, more comprehensive and balanced volume than he or I could have achieved alone. His interest was primarily in the craftsmanship and elegance of botanical illustrations and flower paintings from an aesthetic viewpoint, mine from a scientific one and a concern with illustrations accurately making known the diversity and intricacy of the plant world. Our attitudes thus complemented each other. Blunt was a fair-minded and scholarly person with whom it was a pleasure to co-operate. I hope I may be pardoned for quoting from a characteristically generous letter of his to the late Dr. Agnes Arber on 23 February 1951: "I never realised at the time of starting [on *The Art of Botanical Illustration*] that William Stearn was contemplating a full length book on the same subject. His assistance was absolutely invaluable to me, for since I am no botanist at all I would have committed a host of blunders. He gave unstintingly of his prodigious knowledge and I am very sorry the reviewers said so little about his share. I am getting acclimatised to the colour plates in *Bot. III*. They were a bit of a shock at first!" The colour printing was indeed not as good as Blunt and I had hoped. Nevertheless, no other book then illustrated so well the variety and quality of plant portraits made from the fifteenth century onwards; accordingly it proved a success with three new impressions up to 1967 and it remained in demand, secondhand copies fetching high prices for lack of a new edition. There was even a Japanese translation in 1985.



Catasetum saccatum by Margaret Mee. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Wilfrid Jasper Walter Blunt was born in 1901 in the village of Ham, near Richmond, Surrey, where his father, Arthur Stanley Vaughan Blunt, was vicar. His first name commemorated the poet, traveller, revolutionary and breeder of Arab horses, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), and it always astonished our Wilfrid Blunt that his clerical parents should thus have associated him with a relative notorious as a womaniser. His mother, Hilda Violet (*née* Master), came from nearby Petersham. They had two other sons, Christopher Evelyn (1904-1987) and Anthony Frederick (1907-1983). All three achieved distinction, Wilfrid as a prolific and versatile writer, Christopher as a merchant banker

and numismatist renowned for research on medieval coinage, Anthony as a high-ranking art critic and historian and also, of course, as a Soviet spy. “It may well be”, wrote Ian Stewart in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 76: 35 (1991), “that Christopher’s work, though less well known, will prove to have been the most original and fundamental”. Wilfrid himself in 1986 described Christopher as “by far the best of the Blunts”; he did not long outlive Wilfrid, for he died on 20 November 1987.

Wilfrid, like his brothers later, gained a scholarship to Marlborough College, passed in 1920 from there to Worcester College, Oxford, but in 1921 forsook Oxford for Paris to train as an artist, then entered the Royal College of Art, London. In 1923 he became art master at Haileybury College, Hertfordshire, and here his stay, unlike those at Marlborough and Oxford, was a happy one. In 1932 he moved to Eton College, Windsor, as an art master and remained there until his retirement in 1959, apart from spending the year 1934 in Munich and Florence training abortively as an opera singer. He ended in 1959 his thirty-six years as a schoolmaster but certainly not his activity as a travel and biographical author.

Although Blunt had a lifelong interest in painting and music, he first discovered his literary vocation in 1941 and 1942. “Writing”, he remarked in 1986, “is certainly laborious; but I have never found it a chore and it has given me untold pleasure”. He accordingly took full advantage of the leisure granted him by his appointment in 1959, thanks partially to Anthony Blunt’s influence, as Curator of the Watts Gallery at Compton near Guildford, Surrey. This houses paintings by the Victorian portrait and allegorical painter George Frederick Watts (1817-1904). The Curator’s House adjoins the Gallery and, he wrote, “it had something that I had always longed for – a loggia where I could write in summer...Further the job made no pretence at being more than half-time, the intention being that it would allow a creative artist or author to continue pursuing his own work. And not, it appeared, really even *half-time*?” This proved an ideal situation for Blunt. He was ever on the lookout for a subject of

interest to him about which he could write a book or article and his interests were certainly varied. At Eton he had published eight books dealing with people as diverse as Abd-el-Kader (1947), Mulai Ismail (1951), Pietro delle Valle (1953) and Sebastiano Locatelli (1956) and subjects as diverse as botanical illustration (1950), calligraphy (1952) and Iran (1957). At Compton he produced seventeen more books. These included biographies of Lady Muriel Paget (1962), Sydney Cockerell (1964), John Christie (1968), King Ludwig II of Bavaria (1970), Carl Linnæus (1971), Felix Mendelssohn (1974), and F.G. Watts (1975) and others on Isfahan (1966), the London Zoo (1976), the splendours of Islam (1976), the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (1978), and the illustrated herbal (with Sandra Raphael; 1979), all of them interesting, anecdotal, well-researched and well-written. No specialist himself, unlike Anthony and Christopher, he was “always sorry that Anthony so despised the amateur”; however he felt “thankful that I never pretended to be anything but an amateur in any field”, having noticed so much backbiting and bickering among professionals. Essentially Blunt was a scholarly, talented and witty populariser and everything he did reflected his feeling for quality. He revealed much about himself in two frank and engaging volumes, *Married to a Single Life: an Autobiography* (1983) and *Slow on the Feather: further Autobiography 1938-1959* (1986). Regarding the title *Slow on the Feather*, Blunt wrote to me, “in case you are not so good on athletic matters as on botanical, it means ‘rowing badly’ or, more generally, totally incompetent at every form of sport – ME in a nutshell”.

Blunt retired from curatorship of the Watts Gallery in 1985 but the trustees graciously allowed him to continue living in the Curator’s House. His death in 1987 ended a prolific literary career with high standards maintained throughout. In 1986 he fittingly summarised his life: “on the whole my years as a schoolmaster – my spring at Haileybury and my summer at Eton – were very happy, and my even longer autumn at Compton was to prove a reward beyond my deserts”.

The usefulness of *The Art of Botanical Illustration* (1950) and frequent demand, when it was no longer in print, made a reissue desirable. Much to Blunt’s dismay both the original illustrations and blocks had disappeared without trace. He hoped, nevertheless, that there might be a new edition and as part-author of the first one I have undertaken this. Since 1950 much has been published on botanical illustration, notably Claus Nissen, *Die botanische Buchillustration*, 2nd ed. (1966), a truly monumental work, and G.D.R. Bridson and J.L. White, *Plant, Animal and Anatomical Illustration in Art and Science, a bibliographical Guide* (1990), studies of individual artists such as G. Calmann, *Ehret* (1977), W.A. Emboden, *Leonardo da Vinci* (1987) and M.J. Norst, *Ferdinand Bauer* (1989), well-illustrated botanical works of which P. Goldblatt, *The Genus Watsonia* (1989), O.M. Hilliard and B.L. Burtt, *Dierama* (1991) and A.S. George and C. Rosser, *The Banksias* (1981 and 1988) are but three examples, and guides to the techniques of plant illustration such as K. West, *How to draw Plants* (1983) and *Painting Plant Portraits* (1991). Moreover the number of competent botanical artists, both professional and amateur, has astonishingly increased and their work stands comparison with that of the great masters of the past as J.J. White and D.E. Wendel’s *Catalogue, 6th International Exhibition of Botanical Art and Illustration* (1988), J.J. White and A.M. Farole’s *Catalogue, 7th International Exhibition* (1992), other Hunt Institute catalogues and my *Flower Artists of Kew* (1990), published in the USA as *British Masters*, make evident. At least six hundred artists have published botanical illustrations since 1950. No book of moderate size can adequately encompass the display of so much talent. Regrettably, even the much extended Chapter 23, “The Twentieth Century”, only indicates a little of this meritorious activity.

The text of the present edition is basically that of the original edition. Blunt’s aesthetic judgments remain unchanged; statements with “I” or “me” in them are his. The passing of over forty years has, however, made it necessary to amend or increase every



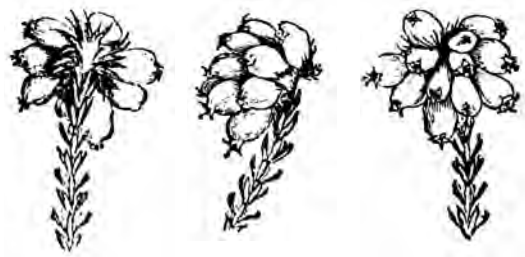
Colour Plate 73. Cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) by James Sowerby

– that of a bizarre carnation named *Franklin's Tartar*, one of the few Florists' flowers admitted to the work – appeared in 1788 in the second volume, and during the twenty-seven years that followed, almost all the drawings in it were his. In fact, of the first 1721 plates, he seems to have been responsible for all but seventy-five. In 1815, as the result of a misunderstanding, Edwards severed his connections with the *Botanical Magazine* and started the rival *Botanical Register*, a course of action which brought upon him the reproaches of the Curtis family. His other work includes twenty-one plates for the sixth fascicle of the *Flora Londinensis*, and the illustrations to McDonald's *A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening* (1807).² The originals of the latter, many of which portray American plants, are in the Natural History Museum, London.

Sydenham Edwards was a conscientious and industrious artist, but his line lacks the swiftness of Sowerby's. In his early work his colour, especially his green, is sometimes harsh, and his hatched and stippled tone laboured until it becomes lifeless. His later drawings for the *Botanical Magazine*, which are now at Kew, and his plates in the *Flora Londinensis*, are much stronger and show a better understanding of the structure and habit of the plants portrayed (Colour Plate 73).

The work of the two Bauer brothers demands a separate chapter; but a number of lesser English artists of the late eighteenth century cannot be left unnoticed.

William Roxburgh (1751-1815), who spent more than thirty years of his life in India, was an eminent botanist and a meticulous if rather arid artist. His *Plants of the Coast of Coromandel* (3 vols., 1795-1819) must rank among the most impressive publications of the age, though its plates, which were engraved from some of his large collection of drawings by native Indian artists, are often rather marred by a heavy and wiry outline. These plates form a valuable supplement to his *Flora Indica*, in which a large number of new species first detected by Roxburgh are recorded; for though his descriptions are good, they do not



always give all the details required by botanists to-day.

John Edwards (fl. 1768-95) of Brentford made some very decorative illustrations for his *British Herbal* (1770) and *A Collection of Flowers drawn after Nature and disposed in an Ornamental and Picturesque Manner* (1783-95); but in the main his work is too stylized to satisfy the botanist.

The indefatigable Margaret Meen (fl. 1775-1824) made many hundreds of very effective paintings of exotic plants at Kew and elsewhere. In spite of all her immense industry and patience, however, she never quite rises above the level of a very highly gifted amateur. A large collection of her work, once the property of the Earl of Tankerville, is now in the Kew Herbarium. A handful of watercolours in the Victoria and Albert Museum, by A. Power (c. 1800) of Maidstone, show him to have been a skilful exponent of the style of Ehret. William Bartram (1739-1823), son of John Bartram who was the first native North American botanist, made careful studies of plants and animals in Florida and Carolina.³ Richard Anthony Salisbury (1761-1829), distinguished as a botanist, used his pencil with skill and delicacy, as is testified by his sketches in the Natural History Museum.

But the work of none of the artists mentioned in this chapter can stand comparison with that of Francis (Franz) and Ferdinand Bauer, two of the finest draughtsmen in the whole history of botanical art.

Figure 49. Cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*). From a drawing by Ruskin, c. 1883



Colour Plate 74. *Linum caespitosum* by Ferdinand Bauer

CHAPTER 17
FRANCIS AND FERDINAND BAUER

The name of Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) has more than once been mentioned in these pages. During the closing decades of the eighteenth century and the opening years of the nineteenth, he occupied a unique position in the English scientific world. In his youth he had shown a pleasing impartiality in electing to be educated at Harrow and Eton successively; as a young man, his wealth and enthusiasm were ever at the disposal of any worthy cause; his house and collection in Soho were open to all who sought admission; and throughout his life he rendered incomparable service to the study of natural science by subsidising botanists, explorers and artists all the world over. Among those who sunned themselves in the genial rays of his munificence were the brothers Francis and Ferdinand Bauer, the greatest exponents of botanical drawing in England since the death of Ehret.

Like Ehret, the Bauers were artists of Germanic birth who made England the land of their adoption. Their father, who lived at Feldsberg, Lower Austria (which in 1919 became Valtice, Czechoslovakia), and was court painter to Prince Liechtenstein, died when his three children were still in infancy. Joseph, the eldest, became in due course curator of the Prince's collection and passes out of this story. Francis (b. 1758) gave early sign of his talent, and a drawing by him of *Anemone (Pulsatilla) pratensis* was engraved and published when he was only thirteen years old. Ferdinand, two years his junior, showed the same tastes; when he was fifteen, Father Norbert Boccus, Abbot of Feldsberg, who was a keen botanist, recognised his ability and engaged him to paint a large number of "miniature" – that is to say, highly finished – flower studies which later passed into the Liechtenstein collection. About 1780 the brothers, well trained by Boccus, left Feldsburg for Vienna, Ferdinand being employed by

Nikolaus von Jacquin, then engaged on producing his sumptuous illustrated botanical works.

In 1784 John Sibthorp, Sherardian Professor at Oxford, arrived in Vienna to study the great Dioscorides manuscript, the *Codex Vindobonensis* (see p. 36), before setting out on a botanical tour of the Levant in order to identify the plants named as remedies by Dioscorides. Through the agency of Jacquin and Boccus, he made the acquaintance of Ferdinand Bauer and persuaded him to become his travelling companion as "my painter", together with Sibthorp's brother-in-law John Hawkins, a keen botanist, geologist and classical scholar acquainted with classical and modern Greek and also German, for Ferdinand then can have known little English. They left Vienna in the spring of 1786.

After spending June in Crete, where "our botanical adventurers were welcomed by Flora in her gayest attire," the travellers sailed on among the Greek islands to Smyrna (Izmir). The winter was passed at Constantinople; and the following spring they set out for Cyprus.

Besides making innumerable botanical studies, Ferdinand also found time to paint sketches of the country through which they journeyed. In December, after a summer and autumn spent in Greece, Sibthorp returned to Oxford bringing Ferdinand with him. Here the arduous task of sorting and classifying specimens went slowly forward, while Ferdinand prepared from his sketches the finished drawings which were later to form the illustrations for Sibthorp and Smith's celebrated *Flora Graeca* (1806-40). The numbers on his drawings at Oxford show that he was using an elaborate colour code and he likewise used this later on Flinders's voyage.

Possibly at Ferdinand's suggestion his brother Franz (Francis) now visited England with the



younger Jacquin. Francis had intended to go with Jacquin to Paris, where, in spite of the Revolution, the pursuit of science continued without interruption; but a tempting offer by Banks, made the day before he was due to leave England, changed the whole course of his career. The latter had long realised the importance of attaching a permanent draughtsman to the Royal Gardens at Kew, of which he was virtually director; in Francis Bauer he recognised his man. With the King's approval and his own characteristic generosity, Banks allotted Francis a liberal salary from his private purse and made arrangements for its continuance after his

Plate 52. *Brunonia australis*. Coloured engraving by Ferdinand Bauer for *Transactions of Linnean Society of London* (1806). The Australian genus *Brunonia* commemorates Robert Brown, Ferdinand Bauer's companion on Flinders' voyage

death. Thus Francis, who did not share his brother's taste for adventure, settled in 1790 at Kew, where he remained until his death fifty years later.

Ferdinand Bauer did not accompany Sibthorp upon his second expedition to the Levant in 1794-95, but continued work upon his Greek drawings. Sibthorp returned from the East a sick man: neither the tepid sea-water baths of Brighton, nor a drastic diet of asses' milk at Oxford, could arrest the melancholy progress of tuberculosis, and he died the following spring. Flaxman designed his monument in Bath; but the *Flora Graeca* remains his true monument. Sibthorp, however, wrote nothing of this. His confused notes and abominable handwriting severely tried the patience of his friend the methodical and industrious Sir J.E. Smith, to whom Hawkins and his fellow executor Thomas Platt entrusted the writing of the *Flora Graeca*. As Hawkins said, "Dr. Sibthorp did not mark all his specimens, or the drawings; but he trusted to his memory and dreamed not of dying". Vols. 1-7 part 1 (1806-1831) were the work of Smith, 7 part 2-10 (1832-40) of John Lindley. Hawkins (who died in 1841) and Platt supervised the publication of these ten noble folios from start to finish. Superbly printed and illustrated, it was the finest illustrated flora produced in England and fundamental to the study of Greek plants (Colour Plates 74 and 75). Only twenty-five copies of the first edition were issued, at £254 a set. The total cost was about £30,000, this highly uncommercial proposition being made possible by a considerable sum of money set aside by Sibthorp for the purpose.¹

Though Ferdinand did not return to the Levant, he still felt the wanderlust. In the autumn of the year 1800, when Matthew Flinders was making preparations for his audacious voyage of exploration to Australia, Sir Joseph Banks invited the painter to accompany Flinders as botanical artist, with a salary of £300 a year and rations for himself and his servant. Ferdinand accepted at once. The ship's company also included William Westall the landscape artist, and the young Scottish botanist Robert Brown who was to become "perhaps the greatest figure in the whole history of British botany" (Plate 52).



Cistus incanus.

Colour Plate 75. *Cistus x incanus* by Ferdinand Bauer

The story of the adventurous journey, so rich in scientific discoveries of every kind, can be read in Flinders's own narrative and in his biography by Ernest Scott. Ferdinand's industry was colossal, and he seems to have remained unperturbed by the dangers and hazards of the long voyage. Only once – when the water poured into his cabin and destroyed a number of his drawings – do we hear of his temper being overtaxed; but he was more fortunate than Westall, whose whole output first suffered shipwreck, and was then further damaged by a group of high-spirited young midshipmen (one of whom afterwards became Sir John Franklin) who drove a flock of sheep over the drawings as they lay drying on the coral sands of Wreck Reef. It was five years before Bauer reached England again, and five more before Flinders, who was held a prisoner by the French in Mauritius, obtained permission to return home. Geographical names in Southern Australia, such as Flinders Island, Cape Bauer, Point Westall and the Sir Joseph Banks group of islands, still bear record of the discoveries of these brave pioneers and the generosity of the patron who helped to make them possible.

Some years after his return to England, Ferdinand began to prepare the plates for his *Illustrationes Florae Novae Hollandiae* (1813). It was a heavy task, for, as his brother Francis tells us, "Ferdinand could not find people capable either of engraving or colouring the plates properly, and was consequently obliged to execute every part of the work with his own hands, thus occupying far too much time. Very few, indeed, coloured copies has he been able to prepare and sell." Moreover, the moment was not propitious for such a venture; war had impoverished the patrons, who were in any case growing a little weary of the endless succession of costly botanical books which appeared year after year. Thornton's *Temple of Flora*, as we shall see, suffered a similar fate. After fifteen plates of the *Illustrationes* had been issued, the project was abandoned; and Ferdinand, depressed by his failure, packed up his drawings and his herbarium, shook the dust of England from his feet, and returned to his fatherland. He had saved enough

money to buy a small house near the gardens of Schönbrunn, and here he completed his series of finished drawings of Australian plants and animals. There were many pleasant botanical excursions in the Styrian and Austrian Alps; and before his death in 1826, he relented and paid one more visit to his English friends, among whom would certainly have been old Sir Joseph Banks.

Francis lived on at Kew, making his splendid paintings of plants introduced into cultivation there by the travellers and navigators of the reign of George III. Queen Charlotte and Princess Elizabeth took lessons from him; but the latter did not stay the course, for he proved "a better philosopher than courtier, and his services, which were given gratuitously, were soon dispensed with." The Queen, however, was an apter pupil, and tinted engravings of his drawings under the direction of the master. "There is not a plant in the Gardens of Kew..." wrote Thornton, "but has either been drawn by her gracious Majesty, or some of the Princesses,² with a grace and skill which reflect on these personages the highest honour;" and James Pye, worst of Poet Laureates, embroidered the theme:

*While Royal NYMPHS, fair as the Oreade race
Who trod Eurotas' brink, or Cynthus' brow,
Snatch from the wreck of time each fleeting
grace,
And bid its leaves with bloom perennial glow.*

Francis had not remained content to draw the mere outward appearance of plants; he had become a highly skilled botanist, and his microscopic drawings soon became as famous as his flower studies. He made remarkable drawings of pollen grains now in the Natural History Museum. When Banks began his researches on blight, Francis was at his side; his work on the structure of orchids (Colour Plate 76) was of first importance; and when Sir Everard Home was in difficulties over the anatomical structure of the foot of the common house-fly, Francis came to the rescue with a brilliant series of drawings. Most of these tasks



Colour Plate 76. Broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) by Francis Bauer



From the earliest drawings in Antiquity to identify medicinal herbs, through medieval woodcuts, the 19th-century lithographs of Walter Fitch and on to modern-day paintings, this is the classic work on the art of Botanical Illustration, bringing the great illustrators – past and present – to life.

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