

William Henry Harvey and his Australian Seaweeds

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The Irish botanist William Henry Harvey visited Australia in 1854, for the express purpose of 'exploring the natural history of the southern coasts of that continent' and 'extensively collecting Marine Algae'. During his stay in Australia Harvey gathered some 20,000 specimens, representing about 600 species and including many new to science, which formed the basis of what was to become his most significant contribution to the study of Australian seaweeds, the five-volume 'Phycologia Australica' (1858-63). These lavish volumes include colour plates of 300 species of Australian algae, and to this day they remain important references for students of Australian marine algae. Harvey was both the artist and lithographer of the plates included in these volumes. The accuracy, detail and sheer beauty of his illustrations has meant their appreciation endures to this day, and they have been reproduced in numerous books. Despite the over 150 years since Harvey's monumental contributions, and numerous taxonomic investigations by eminent phycologists such as Bryan Womersley, some of Harvey's species remain poorly known, particularly in what Harvey termed the 'Callithamnia', the small, filamentous red algae that were not represented by fertile specimens in his collections. As noted by Womersley (1996: 233), these 'must remain doubtful'. Most of these mystery species were originally collected in Western Australia, and I have endeavoured to recollect, morphologically and molecularly characterise, and propose defensible generic reassignments for this suite of species, the results of which will be discussed in my presentation.

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION

The ISA is an international organisation dedicated to the encouragement of research and development of seaweed and seaweed products. The mission of the ISA is to promote applied phycology on a global basis, and to stimulate interactions among research workers and industrialists in all relevant institutions and industries in all countries. Within this mission, the objectives of the ISA are primarily directed towards seaweeds, but also include other algae including cyanobacteria, as well as algal constituents.

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