



NEPAL

NATURAL HISTORY DRAWINGS

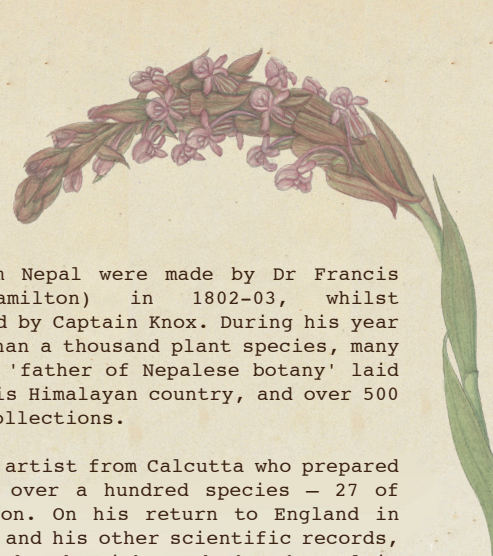
**Francis Buchanan-Hamilton
1802-03**

The first UK exhibition of the
first scientific Natural
History collections from Nepal

Admission Free

Open to the public:
7th to 24th January
Monday-Friday, 10am-1pm, 2-4pm

Embassy of Nepal
12A Kensington Palace Gardens
London, W8 4QU



The first Natural History collections from Nepal were made by Dr Francis Buchanan (later known as Buchanan-Hamilton) in 1802-03, whilst surgeon-naturalist on the British Mission led by Captain Knox. During his year in the Kathmandu Valley he documented more than a thousand plant species, many of which are now rarely seen. This Scottish 'father of Nepalese botany' laid the foundation of botanical knowledge for this Himalayan country, and over 500 new species have been described using his collections.

Buchanan-Hamilton brought with him a Bengali artist from Calcutta who prepared exquisite coloured watercolour drawings of over a hundred species – 27 of which have been selected for this exhibition. On his return to England in 1806, Buchanan-Hamilton gave these drawings, and his other scientific records, to his friend from University days, James Edward Smith, and they have lain virtually unknown in the archives of the Linnean Society of London (which Smith founded) ever since. This exhibition is the first public viewing outside Nepal of Buchanan-Hamilton's drawings, made by a talented but sadly un-named Indian artist.

Current research is uncovering the scientific and cultural value of these early collections. Buchanan-Hamilton placed great importance on local names people were using for plants and instructed his Indian pandit, Babu Ramajai Bhattacharji, to record these spoken names and translate them into English. Buchanan-Hamilton frequently used these common names for the new scientific names that he coined and wrote on the drawings – some of these are still in use today.

Buchanan-Hamilton is now recognised as the pioneer of biodiversity research in Nepal, but he could not have done this by himself and he needed to collaborate with Nepalese and Indian people. As he was one of the first foreigners to spend any length of time in Nepal, he had an unsurpassed understanding of the people, their cultures and traditions, which later helped underpin the developing relationship between Britain and Nepal. Two centuries on, botanical research continues with British and Nepalese scientists working together on the Flora of Nepal – www.floraofnepal.org.

This facsimile exhibition has been produced by the Linnean Society of London and Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, with the support of the Embassy of Nepal and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh



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Drawings online: www.linnean-online.org/buchanan_hamilton.html
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