

VII. THE HERBARIUM OF THE INSTITUT BOTANIQUE  
DE LA FACULTE DES SCIENCES, CAEN

During the last world war the town of Caen was almost completely destroyed. The valuable collections of the Caen herbarium (CN) were evacuated and were thus saved.

It is now twenty years after the war. The town of Caen has been beautifully rebuilt and the newly erected buildings of the university are very impressive. This university, founded in 1432, is now said to be not only the oldest but at the same time the most modern in France. Although the herbarium is now in a modern building, this does not mean that it is managed in a modern way.

The herbarium is housed in 102 closed, new, wooden cupboards (each divided into 36 compartments) placed on the rough concrete floor of the top story of the building of the Faculté des Lettres. These cupboards are only provisionally labelled either with chalk or by notices attached to the keys. The herbarium consists of a great number of smaller "herbiers", which are named after the collectors or former owners. Within these "herbiers" the plants are arranged according to the system followed by the former owner, or according to the locality where the plants have been collected, or in complete disorder. A rough subdivision has been made into algae, fungi, lichens, bryophytes and cormophytes.

Amongst the last-mentioned group, however, several small collections of algae and fungi were detected. To give an idea, how complicated it is to select all material of any given taxon, I have listed the number of "herbiers" for the 5 above mentioned groups:

	Number of "herbiers"
Algae	15
Fungi	11
Lichens	10
Bryophytes	20
Cormophytes	35

The algal collection, of which the "herbiers" of Lenormand, Morière, Pelvet and Lamouroux are numerically the most important, has been catalogued and is in a good condition. Several collections of "zoophytes" (hydroids, bryozoa, sponges) are kept with the algae, which may be of interest to zoo-taxonomists, as among them are several types of Lamouroux. The collection of the cormophytes has been catalogued only for a minor part. I found a card catalogue for the "herbier" Rotereau, and probably there are catalogues for the "herbiers" Chauvin and Rothkegel.

The condition of the largest and most important "herbiers" e.g. those of Lévillé, Vieillard, Godey, Husnot, Fournier and Hahn is very bad, as a consequence of attacks by small beetles and the decay of labels and herbarium sheets. Of many

specimens only the sclerenchymatic parts are left. Loosening of the ties of the bundles of herbarium material, which had not been opened for many years, often caused increased damage, e.g. labels falling to pieces. Many labels, indicating families or genera are simply placed loosely in between the sheets. Further as a consequence of the decay of several of them they have become unreliable.

The important collection of Dumont d'Urville is in a relatively good condition, as far as the dried material itself is concerned. The sheets are not labelled but on the bundles the localities are given in pencil. They are partly unreliable, as there is a bundle, labelled Auckland Islands containing tropical species, which have not been recorded for New Zealand at all.

The "herbier général" is kept in 18 cupboards in the corridor of the botanical department. It appears to be catalogued (although I had not seen the catalogue). The labels indicating families and genera are again loosely inserted between the sheets.

It is a pity that the important collections of Vieillard, Lévillé and Dumont d'Urville, which contain many types, are in a bad condition and almost inaccessible to botanists. It would be a great service to tropical botany, if these collections could be rearranged, relabelled and catalogued, so that they could become available for study.

Rijksherbarium, Leiden.

C.den Hartog.

#### VARIA

In "Fifty years Science in India. Progress of Botany" the section on plant taxonomy occupies only seven pages and its introduction contains an ominous sentence: "Once important, systematic botany is now a rather neglected field of study". It seems necessary to point out that research on plants, no matter how brilliant, painstaking and accurate, is utterly worthless unless the identity of the plant be fixed. It is not unknown for a chromosome count to be published for a plant whose identity has no greater value than the name on a seed packet, and is not even substantiated by a voucher specimen. We trust that the young men of the Botanical Survey of India will see to it, that systematic botany takes its true place among the other flourishing fields of this science.

N.L.Bor  
(Kew Bull. 19, 1965, 353).