

ON THE DATE OF PUBLICATION OF J. ALLAN THOMSON'S 'BRACHIOPOD MORPHOLOGY AND GENERA'

The Date of publication of Thomson's well-known work is a matter of some interest in respect to a problem of zoological nomenclature. This problem of priority is somewhat complex and the taxonomic aspects have been considered elsewhere (Dawson, 1971).

In brief, the Tertiary to Recent brachiopod originally named *Terebratulina cancellata* Koch was renamed *Terebratulina hedleyi* by H. J. Finlay in 1927, while Thomson in the same year proposed the name *Cancellothyris australis*. The need for renaming arose from the preoccupation of the specific name by *Terebratula cancellata* Eichwald, 1829. Both Finlay's and Thomson's names have been used subsequently.

Since Thomson's 1927 monograph also contains eight new generic names (*Hispanirhynchia*, *Abyssothyris*, *Japanithyris*, *Jaffaia*, *Pictothyris*, *Neobouchardia*, *Pirothyris*, *Malleia*) which have been used subsequently and might well be involved in priority questions, I have made some effort to determine the actual date of publication of Thomson's 'Brachiopod Morphology and Genera'.

This book was published by the New Zealand Board of Science and Art, under the imprint of the Dominion Museum (J. Allan Thomson being secretary to the board as well as Director of the Dominion Museum), as its Manual No. 7; it was printed by the Government Printing Office, Wellington, the printing order (page 338) giving the date of order as December 1926 and the number to be printed as 700. The cost of printing was estimated to be ±200, according to the minutes of the Board of Science and Art, and the selling price was 17/- with postage 6d. Today the Government Printing Office still has fifty-three copies in stock and the price is \$1.70, the postage rate only having increased over forty-four years!

The archives of the Dominion Museum hold some correspondence and papers of Dr. J. Allan Thomson (Director, 1914-1928), especially in a file labelled 'Brachiopoda 1914-1933'.

In a letter, dated May 26, 1927, to Professor Ichiro Hayasaka of Tohoku University, Thomson stated:

'I am very shortly bringing out a manual of the Morphology and Genera of Recent and Tertiary Brachiopods, and it would be perhaps as well for

you to see it before completing your revision' [of the Tertiary Brachiopoda of Japan].

To J. Wilfrid Jackson, Thomson wrote (September 15, 1927):

'I have delayed answering your letter until I could send you a copy of my book.... It is now being printed off by the Government Printer, but may be a little delayed because at this time of the year there is a pressure of Parliamentary printing at the printing office. Meanwhile I send you page proofs. I am having the greatest difficulty in getting the figures straightened up — I fear they will disfigure the book. I have arranged to be allowed to distribute a number of free copies to correspondents who will consent to review the book in some suitable scientific journal, and hope you will accept one on these conditions. You are in a better condition to judge of the value of the new book, and to appreciate what parts are original and new, than any one else. I hope its perusal will tempt you back to the group.... Now that the book is off my hands I hope to ... tackle a palaeontological bulletin on the New Zealand Tertiary species. My health, however, prevents me making very quick progress, for I have just had to take another three months sick leave, and have to nurse my powers very carefully. I am sorry to see the ranks of Brachiopod scholars rapidly thinning. I had hoped Clarke and Walcott and Dall would live to see my book. Schuchert tells me he has a young man taking up the group, who will work on his very extensive collections and test out my new proposals in classifications and phylogeny, which he does not apparently like. I am not exactly old yet and am rather amused that a tyro is to put us all right ...'

The 'tyro' was Dr. G. Arthur Cooper, now the world's leading brachiopod specialist, lately retired from the U.S. National Museum as chairman of the Department of Paleobiology (*cf.* Dutro, 1971); how prophetic Schuchert's words to Thomson were is well shown by Cooper's latest work, a fundamental analysis of the criteria on which generic classifications in the Brachiopoda have been established (Cooper, 1969).

On November 28, 1927, Thomson wrote to S. S. Buckman:

'At last my book ... is due from the printers, and a copy will be posted to you by an early mail. The book is issued by the Board of Science and Art, but I have secured free copies for my correspondents mainly on the understanding that they will treat them as review copies. In your case no

such stipulation is made, but if you care to write a review and send it to one of the Science journals, I shall be very grateful, as there is no more competent than yourself to do so. The paper I previously submitted for the Royal Society consisted of extracts from the book, and as Dr. Butler considered it too long for the amount of new matter contained in it (which he apparently estimated mainly by the number of new names proposed), I withdrew it and awaited the publication of the book. The reading of the proofs and checking of the references occupied most of my spare time till the middle of this year. Since then I have been again on sick leave, and unable to do any further original work. Now that the book is off my hands, I hope when health permits, to write a paper on Dr. Mortensen's Pacific collections and then to return to my Bulletin on the New Zealand Tertiary species.'

There seems to be no further conclusive evidence in Thomson's papers of the date of publication. It would seem that the book had not appeared by the end of November, 1927. The library of the Dominion Museum possesses two copies, one presented in 1958 from the library of the late Dr. [W. R. B. Oliver](#), Director of the Dominion Museum in succession to Dr. [J. Allan Thomson](#), but possessing no evidence of date of purchase; the other copy was accessioned on January 3, 1928 (No. 3105), a price of 17/6 being recorded for it. Two copies are in the General Assembly Library (sent free from the Dominion Museum under the Copyright Act) and these were accessioned on January 17, 1928 (No. 114715). Allowing for the intervening Christmas holiday period, it seems likely that the book was actually issued early in December, 1927.

Finally, a word must be said of the worth of Thomson's book, the completion of which may be said to have cost him his life (judging by Thomson's letter to Buckman). Thomson died, a victim of tuberculosis, on May 6, 1928, at the early age of forty-six. Contemporary reviews appeared in *Nature*, *Geological Magazine*, *American Journal of Science*, *N.Z. Journal of Science and Technology*, amongst others (see Anon., 1928; C.S., 1928; G.H.U., 1928; Jackson, 1928) and included such comments as: 'Since ... 1894 ... no other work has dealt so comprehensively and so lucidly with this group' and 'The book, indeed, is a model of what a text book in a biological group should be' and, a word of criticism, 'considering the somewhat high price of the book, it is regrettable that the two plates have been printed back to back, and that their reproduction is not more distinct'. In his memorial to Thomson, Oliver (1928) wrote: 'It is not too much to say that in all zoological literature there is not a work of its type better done.' Thomson's father, the Hon. [G. M. Thomson](#), said

of it: 'This work, on account of its full and clear exposition of a very difficult subject, has at once taken a high place as a scientific classic' ([G. M. Thomson], 1929: 115). Thirty years later, the 'young tyro' could write: 'This is a source book for information relating to morphology, taxonomy and stratigraphy of Recent and Tertiary genera' (Cooper, 1957: 1116); several other present-day workers have paid similar tributes, e.g. Elliott (1951: 308), in his geographical survey of the terebratelloids, said: this '... monumental revision by Thomson ... set a clear course for later work from which so far there has not been great divergence'.

Thomson's work has not been surpassed even by the magnificent two-volume Section H of the 'Treatise on Invertebrate Paleontology' published in 1965 but, rather, is complemented by it. Nor does Rudwick's (1970) recent book of brachiopod structure and function render it redundant. It remains a fine memorial to a great scientist who, as Oliver has said, left a record of an 'immense amount of work' accomplished 'within the space of about half the effective working-years of the average man, and in spite of the severe handicap of indifferent health'.