

Glover - Linking Local and Scientific Plant Knowledge



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INTRODUCTION

In the 1940s Major E.F. Peck was the Director of Agriculture and Veterinary Services for Somaliland. In this capacity he travelled widely throughout the Protectorate and showed a considerable interest in recording plant names and their uses for food and medicine. His very considerable collection of data was stored in box files and donated to the Veterinary Department in Hargeisa when he returned to England in 1952. Sadly, like so much else, these boxes were destroyed during the civil war at the end of the 1980s. Fortunately, Abdillahi Arr, Major Peck's main interpreter, had suggested in the early 1940s that a checklist of Somali plant names should be transcribed, an idea which was taken up by Phillip Glover.

In 1947 Glover published a compilation of Somali plant names, collected by a number of colonial officers, mainly in Somaliland. To this he added previously published names by Chiovenda (1916 and 1932), Drake-Brockman (1912), Gillett (1941) and Révoil (1882). Glover's publication was ordered alphabetically by Somali name. Given that the Somali language only acquired a recognised orthography in 1972 all names were spelt phonetically, with those who collected them often giving more than one spelling for the same species. This made it very difficult to search for the name of any plant. In addition, many scientific names have been updated in the last 80 years. In 2022 it was decided to create an up-to-date database from Glover's published list together with Somali names recorded in the four volumes of *Flora of Somalia* edited by Mats Thulin (1993-2009), enabling people to search using either the Somali or scientific name.

This checklist is ordered alphabetically in both English and Somali. It gives the current scientific name and author (POWO 2024¹), the Somali name, an abbreviation of the collector's name and the scientific name that the collector recorded (where different from the current name). At the end of the species list there is a further list of words collected for things other than plants, such as animals, climate etc.

When the original recorders thought they had collected a new species they sometimes used the vernacular name for that species. In some cases, later research would show that the plant had previously been described under a different name, for example: Chiovenda originally recorded the species *Commiphora africana* var. *africana* as *Commiphora tubuk*. In other cases, the vernacular name has been retained, for example: *Ziziphus hamur*, *Rhynchosia gansole* and *Senegalia ankokib*. In other instances, the Latin name for an introduced plant has been adapted for the Somali vernacular name, for example *Nicotiana tabacum* is known as **Tabaak** in Somali.

Ahmed Ibrahim Awale has compiled a shorter and more up to date list; adding many additional Somali names with their scientific equivalent including invasive plants, introduced plants and ornamentals, collected during 2022-2024. It is hoped this will serve as the basis of an official dictionary of Somali plant names.

¹ POWO (2024). Plants of the World Online. Facilitated by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Published on the Internet; <https://powo.science.kew.org/>. Accessed May 2024.

References used by Glover

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Glover, Phillip Earle. (1947). *A Provisional Checklist of British and Italian Somaliland trees, shrubs and herbs: including the reserved areas adjacent to Abyssinia*. Crown Agents for the Colonies; 4 Milbank London SW1.

Révoil, G.E.J. (1882) *Faune et Flora des Pays Comalis (Afrique Oriental)*. Challamel Ainé, Editeur, 5 Rue Jacob. Paris.

Brief Biographical sketches of the collectors

Burton (Burt.)

The explorer Richard Burton's 'First Footsteps in Africa' (1856) were in Zeila in the extreme northwest corner of Somaliland. He stayed in Zeila for several weeks in the autumn of 1854 before continuing his journey to Harar in Ethiopia and then returned to the coast at Berbera. His subsequent travels in Africa were focussed on the search for the source of the Nile and were located mainly in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.

Chiovenda (Chiov.) 1871 – 1941

Emilio Chiovenda graduated from the University of Rome in 1898 with a degree in Natural Sciences. In 1900 he was appointed the first curator of the Colonial Herbarium in Rome, founded to preserve plant species brought back from Italian territories in Northeast Africa. In 1909 he travelled extensively in Eritrea and Ethiopia making him an authority on plants of that region, with many of the species also occurring in Somaliland, Somalia and northern Kenya. He described 53 new genera and approximately 1,300 new species. In 1915 the Colonial Herbarium was relocated from Rome to Florence.

Collenette (Col.)

In June 1929 C.L. Collette, a botanist from Kew, was asked to accompany the Boundary Commission who were demarcating the border between Eastern Somaliland and Italian Somalia, they were based in Buraan, in Eastern Sanaag province. During this period, he made extensive botanical collections and a small, but important, collection of moths and other insects. He recorded local names noting that they differed between those clans affiliated with the two dominant Darood and Isaaq clans. Unfortunately, an episode of Blackwater fever cut his time in the field short. A list of his collection was published in Kew Bulletin no 8, 1931.

Drake-Brockman (Dr. Br.) 1875-1952

After leaving the army in 1900 Ralph Evelyn Drake-Brockman joined the Foreign Office as a medical officer and served in British East Africa until 1915. He collected plant specimens in Somaliland between 1908 and 1910. His specimens are housed in the herbarium at the British Museum.

Farquharson (Farq)

Robert Alexander Farquharson was appointed government geologist of Somaliland in 1923 where he was in charge of a water boring scheme. In 1924 he published 'First Report on the Geology and Mineral Resources of British Somaliland, with Map'. He then took control of the agricultural department, retiring in 1938. He received an OBE in 1938.

Flora of Somalia (FS)

4 volumes published between 1993 and 2009. Editor Mats Thulin.

Gillett (Gill.) 1911 - 1995

When Jan Bevington Gillett was a scholar at Kings College Cambridge, he was invited to join the 1932 West Somaliland/Harar Boundary Commission. This led to the publication of a vegetation survey of the region. He then served in India during the second World War. Soon after his return to England, Gillett was appointed botanist to the Iraq Department of Agriculture, contributing many records to the Flora of Iraq. In 1948 he returned to the UK as a Principal Scientific Officer at Kew, where he worked on the Flora of Tropical East Africa. In 1952/53 Gillett joined a Boundary Commission on the Kenya-Ethiopia border. He subsequently remained in Kenya and became the Botanist in Charge of the Herbarium from 1964-1971, overseeing its transfer to the National Museums of Kenya. After his retirement he continued his study of *Commiphora*, mainly in Somaliland and Ethiopia.

Glover (Glov.) 1912 – 1978

Philip Earle Glover was born in South Africa and attended Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg where he obtained a DSc. His first job was in Tsetse research in Tabora, Tanzania 1937-39. In 1939 he was appointed Chief Pasture Officer in Somaliland. In the following year together with H.B. Gilliland, he undertook vegetation surveys in Somaliland, before moving to Kenya on a more permanent basis and finally retiring back in South Africa.

Glover published several reports on rangeland ecology and plants in Somaliland.

Hunt (Hunt) 1906 -1986

Major John Antony Hunt OBE was a professional geologist working on oil sites. Between 1936 and 1958 he was a Colonial Administrative Service Officer in the British Protectorate of Somaliland during which time he carried out a wide-ranging survey of the Protectorate. This contained estimates of the population in Somaliland and Puntland, based on tribal estimates, as well as studies of the flora and fauna. His results were published as: A General Survey of the Somaliland Protectorate 1944-1950, Hargeisa 1951.

Milne (Milne) 1898 - 1942

After completing his military service in 1919 Geoffrey Milne took a position of Assistant in Agricultural Chemistry in Aberdeen and then as a lecturer in Agricultural Chemistry in Leeds University, where he had previously completed an MSc. From 1928 -1942 he was the soil chemist at the East Africa Agricultural Research Station at Amani in Tanzania, where he died in 1942. He collected a small number of plants, mainly orchids, with his wife in the mid-1930s.

Publications: A provisional soil map of East Africa + map. Crown Agents London 1936.

Peck (Peck) 1901 - 1971

Edward Finch Peck grew up in England. In 1920 his parents emigrated to Canada, where he trained as a veterinary surgeon. After qualifying he returned to England with his wife and completed a Diploma in Tropical Veterinary Medicine from Edinburgh and Liverpool. He then joined the Colonial Office. He first served in Nigeria (1931-34). He was Director of Veterinary Services in Somaliland (1934 - 1953), with two intervals in Kenya (1940 - 1941) and Tanzania (1944 - 1949).

Playfair (Plfr.) 1828-1899

Robert Lambert Playfair came from a distinguished Scottish family with extensive links to India. He was born and educated in Scotland, joining the Madras Army at the age of 18, eventually leaving the army in 1867 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In 1854 he was posted to Aden where he was involved in maintaining peace in the Gulf of Aden and the southern Red Sea. He carried out investigations in the coastal towns of Zeila, Berbera, Heis and their hinterlands. While in Aden he transplanted Somali Frankincense trees to his garden (they did not survive).

He was fluent in Arabic and subsequently spent time in Egypt, Syria, Zanzibar, Algier and Tunisia. He studied the history, geography, archaeology, flora and fauna of the countries to which he was posted. Publishing among other books A History of Arabia Felix Arabia or Yemen in 1859.

He was Knighted in 1886.

Révoil (Rev.) 1852 - 1894

Georges Emmanuel Joseph Révoil was a French explorer/archaeologist and keen photographer who worked in northern Somalia in the 1880s, where he uncovered Roman artifacts. In 1887 he married a woman from Brazil and became vice-Consul in San Jose, Costa Rica. Shortly before his death he moved to live in Brazil with his wife's family where he died of Beri-Beri.

His publications include Voyages au cap Les Aromates (Afrique Oriental) 1880,

Dix Mois à la Côte Orientale d'Afrique: La Vallée Du Darror Et Le Cap Guardafui 1889.