

NICHOLAS EDWARD BROWN BIOGRAPHY

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Brown, Dr Nicholas Edward (1849–1934)—describer of over 10,000 new species of plants with many drawings and paintings by him—specializing in African succulents—especially Euphorbiaceae, Stapelieae and Mesembryanthemaceae.



Born at Redhill, England, on 11 July 1849, Nicholas Edward Brown became a herbarium botanist, taxonomist, artist, systematist, and geographer. After high school graduation and already interested in natural science, he first obtained work at William Wilson Saunders' (1809–1879) private museum of natural history and notable private garden at Reigate, Surrey, England 1867–1873. NE Brown's interest in succulent plants became due to the collection of such plants by Thomas Cooper (1815–1913) from South Africa 1859–1862 that were in a couple of greenhouses at Reigate.

NE Brown then became the chief assistant in the Herbarium of Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, England from 1873 until retirement in 1914. He continued his association with Kew for many years after his retirement. He was enamored with the succulent plants of South Africa—Asclepiadaceae, Ericaceae, Euphorbiaceae, Iridaceae, Stapelieae and especially Mesembryanthemaceae along with other genera and species which bears his author citation "N.E.Br." behind its name.

NE Brown finished up the last 4 volumes (1896–1933) of *Flora Capensis* with Sir William Turner Thiselton-Dyer (1843–1928) after the deaths of Dr William Henry Harvey (1811–1866) and Dr Otto Wilhelm Sonder (1812–1881) who had completed the first 3 vols (1860–1865) of *Flora Capensis*. NE Brown was credited with articles from various journals/bulletins (including *Gardeners Chronicle*) on *Sansevierias*, *Mesembs* & allied genera, and *Stapelias*.

NE Brown had one succulent plant genus named in his honor—*Brownanthus* described in 1927 by Dr Martin Heinrich Gustav Schwantes (1881–1960). **He** also had species of *Anacampseros*, *Caralluma*, *Cheiridopsis*, *Gibbaeum*, *Mesembryanthemum* (*Lampranthus*), *Raphionacme* and *Tenaris* (*Brachystelma*) **named after him** described by various succulentists. **NE Brown described** over 35 genera, including these popular genera: *Argyroderma*, *Bijlia*, *Cephalophyllum*, *Cheiridopsis*, *Conophytum*, *Delosperma*, *Edithcolea*, *Erepsia*, *Fenestraria*, *Frithia*, *Gibbaeum*, *Glottiphyllum*, *Lampranthus*, *Lithops*, *Nananthus*, *Oophytum*, *Pleiospilos* and *Trichocaulon*. **He described** many species of succulent plants — including *Carallumas*, *Conophytums* and *Sansevierias* — and many, many *Euphorbias*, *Mesembryanthemums* and *Stapelias* — some later transferred to other genera by other succulentists. He transferred many, many *Mesembryanthemum* species into other genera. It's unfortunate that he never traveled to other countries to see succulent plants in habitat.

NE Brown received the Captain Scott Memorial Medal award from the South Africa Biological Society in 1921. He received an honorary degree of doctor of science in recognition of his work on South African flora from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa in 1932.

The unwieldy genus *Mesembryanthemum* became divided into many genera due to the efforts of Dr NE Brown, Dr Harriet Margaret Louisa Bolus (1877–1970) and Dr Martin Heinrich Gustav Schwantes (1881–1960).

Dr Nicholas Edward Brown passed away on 25 November 1934 at the advanced age of 85 years. "Of his work generally it may be said that it is finished, so far as materials permitted?" from a 1914 *Kew Bulletin* at his retirement.

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