

Sir Joseph Banks to Robert Brown: The transition to professionalism in botany

Wednesday, 8th November 2023

Auditorium, Monte Verità, Ascona

Free entrance, reservation welcome: info@csf.ethz.ch, tel. 091 785 40 54

Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) was a British landowner who participated in James Cook's first Pacific voyage (1768-71) but declined the second due to unmet demands. Banks maintained scientific interests and established a research facility in London. He promoted Australian colonization and organized Matthew Flinders's Investigator voyage, appointing Robert Brown (1773-1858) as its scientific leader.

Robert Brown focused on «philosophical» botany, not colonial exploitation, leading to significant scientific breakthroughs. He distributed his work at European conferences and facilitated the transfer of Banks collections to the British Government, resulting in the first publicly funded botanical position in the British Museum. Brown's approach was rooted in Enlightenment ideals rather than imperialism.



Photo courtesy Singapore Botanic Gardens

6.00 – 7.00 pm: Presentation in English

by Prof. David Mabberly, University of Oxford, botanist,
educator and writer

7.00 – 7.30 pm: Questions from the public

Public event presented in the scope of the international conference “Uses, practices and functions of historical herbaria” (5.11. – 9.11.2023), organized by the University of Neuchâtel with the Congressi Stefano Franscini / ETH Zürich.

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