

Charles McIntosh

“The Perthshire Naturalist”

It is one hundred years
since the death of the
“Perthshire Naturalist”



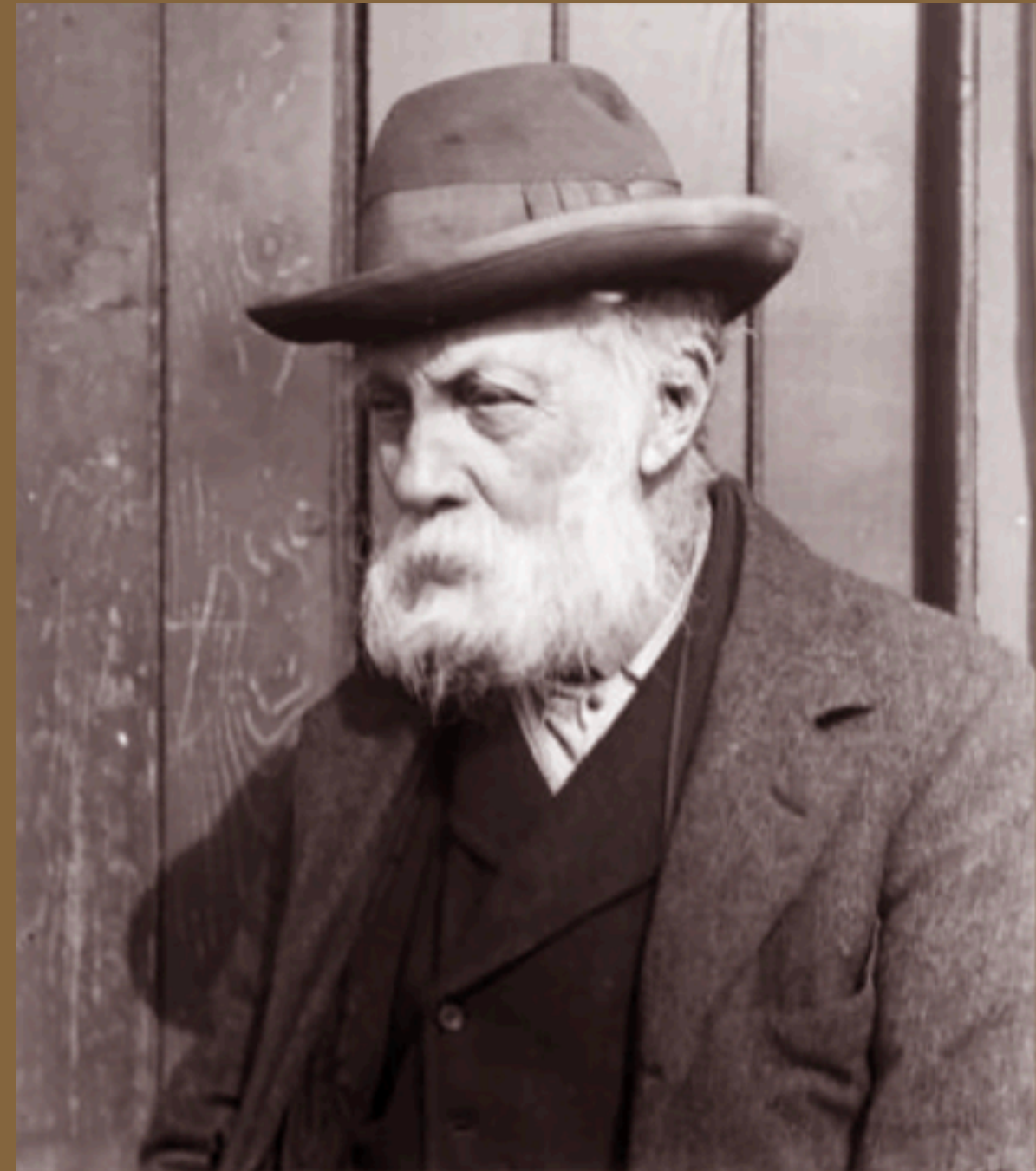


Charles McIntosh was born in 1839 at Inver, near Dunkeld, in the cottage where he lived all his life. His father, also Charles, was a handloom weaver, famous fiddle player, and music teacher. His mother Mary was a descendant of the MacDonalds of Glencoe.

After schooldays Charles worked at Inver Sawmill until in 1857, he had a terrible accident with the circular saw. Charles lost all the fingers and thumb of his left hand. Despite this handicap he still managed to perform on the cello.

With his disability Charles looked for new work and in 1858 he became a rural postman. For the next thirty two years he worked six days a week delivering the mail on foot in all weathers.

From an early age Charles was interested in the natural world. His long postal delivery walks were an opportunity to learn to identify the different species of fern, flowering plant and fungi he saw. In 1872 Charles met Dr Francis Buchanan White of Perth. Dr White had founded the Perthshire Society of Natural Science in 1867. The society had a growing library of natural history books available to members. Dr White proposed Charles as an Associate Member with a reduced subscription which he could afford. He also suggested topics for Charles to study and asked him to collect specimens for the society's museum. Supported by the Society Charles became an expert in fungi and mosses. He discovered thirteen species new to Britain and four which were new to science.



Charles became a friend of Beatrix Potter through their common interest in fungi and the natural history of the area around Dunkeld. The Potter family regularly holidayed in the area and in 1892 the young Beatrix was determined to meet Charles, the local expert, to discuss her fungi drawings with him. She began writing letters and sending him her drawings and McIntosh responded with scientific comments and suggestions.

