

# Prof. Dr. Hermann Müller

## Mühlberg's famous son



Fig. 1

## Stories

from

GeoPark

Inselsberg - Drei Gleichen

leaflet series

\*\*\* Nr. 2 \*\*\*

### Hermann Müller's life

Heinrich Ludwig Hermann Müller was born on 23 September in 1829 in the rectory in Mühlberg (Fig. 7).

He was the second son of the pastor Johannes Friedrich Müller and his wife Martha Caroline Müller, née Trommsdorff.

Hermann Müller was an important botanist with a broad scientific interest and knowledge

in zoology and geology. Over several years he corresponded with Charles Darwin and checked

the latter's theory of descent by studying the relationship between flowers and insects (co-evolution).

#### Biography:

Born in Mühlberg / Thuringia on 23.09.1829

1848 Abitur exam at the Royal Gymnasium (today: Evangelisches Ratsgymnasium) in Erfurt

1848 - 1852 studies of Botany, Zoology and Geology at the universities of Halle and Berlin

1852 - 1855 travels in Central Europe and in the Alps, substitute teacher in Berlin and Schwerin

1855 Doctorate at the University of Jena (topic: "Contributions to a natural system of beetles ")

1855 - 1883 teacher at the junior high school 1st order / Realgymnasium in Lippstadt / Westphalia (today: European School Ostendorf-Gymnasium)

1883 Award of the title of "Professor"

In a letter Charles Darwin wrote about Hermann Müller:

*"With Hermann Müller being such an exact observer and sharp mind, I always hesitate to publish anything in which we do not agree with each other."*

During the last of his five excursions to the Alps Hermann Müller succumbed to emphysema in Prad am Stifserjoch on August 25, 1883. He was buried in the cemetery of St. Johann in Prad / South Tyrol.

In his memory a plaque was attached to the north wall of the Church of St. Johann in Prad (Fig. 2).

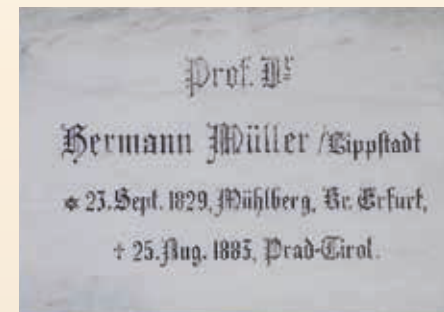


Fig. 2

In 2008, the memorial plaque was removed from the church wall and the grave was leveled.

For the 125th anniversary of his death on 25.08.2008 the plaque was again attached to the enclosure of the cemetery together with a small information board.

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## The naturalist

Professor Hermann Müller attained excellent and diverse scientific achievements, both as a naturalist and as a teacher.

Especially important are his major works on the development of flowering plants and insects in mutual adaptations.

Müller realized at an early stage the extraordinary advance Charles Darwin's theory of the evolution of species would mean for biology.

In their correspondence after 1866 he corroborated and complemented Darwin's theories based on his own accurate scientific studies and advanced them into the context of the biology of flowers.

Shortly before his death, he received due recognition of his work by being awarded the title of professor.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Fig. 3 and 4:  
Among other things the orchid species Müller's Stendelwurz (*Epipactis muelleri*) was named after him.

## The educator

Hermann Müller is considered a co-founder of modern biology teaching. Interdisciplinary aspects were supposed to illustrate connections and motivate students to propose and verify "hypotheses at school".

*"Ample observational material is therefore the first precondition, a systematic analysis of what can be perceived the first methodical requirement for successful lessons in the natural sciences."*

*H. Müller, Der naturgeschichtliche Lehrplan der Realschule zu Lippstadt, 1876 (The natural history curriculum at the Realschule in Lippstadt, 1876)*

Müller objected to the dogmatic learning of knowledge. His curriculum was recommended as exemplary by the school authorities in Prussia. Instead of simply collecting and comparing natural phenomena, students were to discover causes and interrelations in a systematic and accurate methodical way.

At that time it was already self-evident for Müller that his students had to learn by themselves, for instance through his famous excursions to Lippstadt's surroundings.

In remembrance of the eminent biologist a memorial stone and a marble plaque are found at his former school (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5

## Important works by Hermann Müller

"Die Befruchtung der Blumen durch Insekten und die gegenseitigen Anpassungen beider". Leipzig 1873  
("The fertilization of flowers", Leipzig 1873)

The book was translated into English by D'Arcy W. Thompson. It was published in London in 1883 with a foreword by Charles Darwin.

"Alpenblumen, ihre Befruchtung durch Insekten und ihre Anpassungen an dieselben", Leipzig, 1881

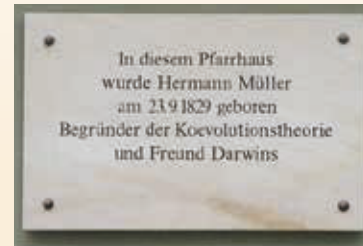


Fig. 6

Text Fig. 6: „In this rectory Hermann Müller was born 23rd September 1829.“ Founder of the theory of co-evolution and friend of Darwin.



Fig. 7: Hermann Müller's birthplace in Mühlberg

At the cemetery wall next to his birthplace, opposite the main entrance of St. Lukas Church, are the gravestones of his parents (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8

Inscriptions:

Left Cross:

Pastor Johann Friedrich Müller born December 7, 1794, died November 18, 1873

Right Cross:

Martha Caroline Müller, née Trommsdorff born 17 October 1799, died 6 February 1843

## Sources:

Literature:

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Figures:

Abb. 1: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0b/Hermann\\_Müller\\_01.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0b/Hermann_Müller_01.jpg)

Abb. 2: [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Hermann\\_Müller\\_\(Lippstadt\)\\_Gedenktafel\\_01.JPG](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Hermann_Müller_(Lippstadt)_Gedenktafel_01.JPG)

Abb. 3 und 4: [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Müllers\\_Stendelwurz](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Müllers_Stendelwurz)

Abb. 5: [http://www.bund-lippstadt.de/hermann\\_m%C3%BCler.htm](http://www.bund-lippstadt.de/hermann_m%C3%BCler.htm)

Abb. 6: Archiv Kulturscheune Mühlberg

Abb. 7: Wolfgang Schröter

Abb. 8: Archiv Kulturscheune Mühlberg