

Obituaries

R. H. ROBERTS
(1910–2003)

Richard Henry (Dick) Roberts, who has died aged 92, was one of the country's leading amateur botanists and a nature conservationist of the highest integrity. His recognition of the botanical interest of the Anglesey fens during the 1950s led directly to their designation as nature reserves and to the establishment of the North Wales Naturalists' Trust (now the North Wales Wildlife Trust) of which he was a proud co-founder and the first General Secretary. In addition he had an international reputation for his taxonomic expertise in *Polypodium*, *Dactylorhiza* and *Mimulus*.

Born at Llanllechid, near Bangor, North Wales, in a strongly Welsh speaking community, Dick took an early interest in botany, encouraged no doubt by his mother's knowledge of herbal plants and his upbringing on the family hill farm. However, he received no formal instruction in botany at school or university and, after graduation from University College of North Wales, Bangor he began a lifetime's career as a primary school teacher. His first teaching post was in Sussex, followed by a spell in Evesham where he met and married Bet, who was his loving and supportive wife for 58 years. In 1947 he was appointed to teach in Penmachno which allowed him to study the mountain flora of Snowdonia, especially the area's ferns. Here he relished the opportunities to study the fine grained distribution patterns of plant species against the wide range of rock types, eagerly seeking out outcrops of Bala Limestone and the Bedded Pyroclastic Series. Finally, in 1955 and now with family, he moved to Bangor where he was a much respected head teacher until his retirement in 1974.

Despite a heavy work load, Dick was an active member of both the British Pteridological Society and the Botanical Society of the British Isles (B.S.B.I.) for almost 50 years. He was appointed B.S.B.I. Vice County Recorder for Anglesey in 1955, a position he carried forward with undiminished enthusiasm and expertise until 1995. During his stewardship he made a number of significant additions to the island's flora, including *Ophioglossum azoricum*, *Equisetum* × *fontqueri*, *Pyrola maritima* subsp. *rotundifolia*, and the marsh orchids, *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri* and *D. majalis* subsp. *cambrensis*. As his interest in marsh orchids grew he undertook detailed morphometric studies which, together with his keen appreciation of ecological factors, gave him a unique field-based insight into this complex. It was the same with the Polypody ferns which he came to understand with great authority; ably distinguishing the cytotypes both in the field and after careful examination at home, regularly preparing sporangia or root tips to view under a microscope on the family's lounge table and thereby to make accurate chromosome counts and cell measurements. He wrote a series of papers for the *Fern Gazette* and *Watsonia* clearly describing his findings in these fields, and frequently accompanied by his own skilled botanical drawings.

After extensive fieldwork Dick published *The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Anglesey* in 1982, an invaluable guide to the island's plant life. An *Atlas of the Flowering Plants and Ferns of Anglesey*, which he published privately in 2002, reveals the detailed extent of his knowledge of the distribution of species, both native and alien. Even in his late 80s and 90th year Dick was presiding over regular sessions giving valuable advice as to the treatment of Anglesey data for the *New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora*.

Despite his commitments to Anglesey, Dick retained a keen and discerning interest in mainland botany, partly as a result of his long friendship with a fellow Caernarfonshire botanist Evan Roberts of Capel Curig, and made notable contributions to our understanding of *Dryopteris* in Snowdonia. He also contributed in a wider field by collaborating with specialists in plant genera such as *Mimulus*, *Equisetum* and *Asplenium*. As well as publishing almost 50 scientific articles and papers of his own Dick has been formally acknowledged in 20 more. He has been given due recognition in the naming of two taxa – *Mimulus* × *robertsii* and *Equisetum* × *robertsii*, the latter a hybrid horsetail discovered on Anglesey in 2002, a fitting tribute to a botanist with a keen eye for hybrids and a deep attachment to the flora of his natal area.

Dick was always happy to share his knowledge and experience, regularly advising university staff and students, professional conservationists and taxonomists, as well as fellow amateur botanists. He acted as a referee for the Botanical Society of the British Isles (B.S.B.I.) for *Polypodium*, *Dactylorhiza* and *Mimulus* with a worthy reputation for his prompt, informative and courteous responses. For a time he was editor of the B.S.B.I. *Welsh Bulletin*.

During the 1950s and 1960s Dick became increasingly involved with conservation as he witnessed first hand the changes to the landscape and wildlife of North Wales wrought by farming, forestry and tourism. He teamed up with Bill Lacey, a Senior Lecturer in the Botany Department in the University at Bangor, to save a fine wetland in the east of Anglesey known as Cors Goch from becoming a rubbish dump, and this action led the two botanists to form the North Wales Naturalists' Trust and a long friendship which was to serve nature conservation well.

Indeed Dick Robert's association with the University at Bangor developed strongly, and in recognition of his botanical scholarship and services to plant conservation he was awarded an Honorary M.Sc by the University of Wales in 1979. He became an Honorary Member of the B.S.B.I. and was awarded the Linnean Society's prestigious H. H. Bloomer Medal for services to botany and conservation in 1999.

Despite such accolades, Dick was an intensely modest man who was content to work quietly without acknowledgement. He had wide interests, which included archaeology, Welsh history and poetry, and even Welsh Mountain sheep breeding. Above all he loved his family and to his wife, Bet and their two daughters Pat and Anne and the wider family we extend our condolences.

There is no doubt that in his combined knowledge of the flora, history and environment of North Wales Dick Roberts was unsurpassed in his lifetime and has continued the fine tradition of Welsh natural historians.

My thanks to Bet Roberts and Ian Bonner for information and comments on this obituary.

NIGEL BROWN

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PETER JOHN SELBY

1946–2003

A member of B.S.B.I. since 1987, Pete Selby was appointed as B.S.B.I. Recorder for v.c. 11 (South Hampshire) in 1999, having organised the recording for the 'new Atlas' in v.c. 11 since 1996. In 2002 Pete was appointed as Hon. Volunteers Officer for the B.S.B.I. National Local Change Project; he set this up, a considerable task, and he had with efficiency made excellent progress with the organisation in the short time then left in his life.

Pete Selby was born on 1 August 1946. His parents were shop owners in Wickham Square near Fareham. He attended Portsmouth Grammar School until 1963, when he joined the army in the Royal Signals, initially attending the Army Apprentices College at Harrogate. His family always had an interest in natural history, and Pete developed his angling skills on the Thames in Oxfordshire while stationed there in the army. Waiting quietly for a fish to bite led first to an interest in ornithology and then to plants because, as he put it, "the birds kept flying away and the plants didn't". He married Janet (Jan) in 1968 and they had a daughter Sara in 1972. Whilst in the army Pete took the opportunity to seek out plants whilst also serving in Yorkshire, Liège (Belgium), Dorset, Herford (W. Germany) and Shropshire, before leaving in 1980 with the rank of Staff Sergeant (Foreman of Signals). He then became a computer engineer and taught himself computer programming, initially using BASIC. He rapidly developed IT skills and learnt to love computers – perhaps somewhat unusually for a botanist of his generation. In conjunction with the technical director of PermaBond he wrote a computer program to select the optimum adhesive for a wide range of situations. Pete's natural ability as an organiser and this early experience with database methods was later to prove useful background for his contribution to B.S.B.I. In 1984 he became a Technical Author, writing instruction manuals for all sorts of things from parts of army tanks to railroad signalling systems for the USA. I remember how one day, as we chatted in a pub, he pointed to a microwave oven and said he had written the instruction book for it. I asked him to tell me more and found that he had even written an instruction manual for a light aircraft.

The story then switches to 2 October 1996 when a meeting was held in Winchester to discuss arrangements for recording the plants of Hampshire for the planned Atlas 2000. Trevor Dines and Catherine Chatters had called the meeting. It had the blessing of the then B.S.B.I. Recorders for Hampshire - Paul Bowman and Lady Anne Brewis - neither of whom felt able to take on the responsibility for the checking and computerisation of thousands of plant records, let alone organising the survey teams. Mike Wildish had agreed to take on v.c. 12 (North Hampshire) but who could, or would, consider the task for v.c. 11 (South Hampshire)? There was an embarrassing silence – many that were there remember it well. Then suddenly in the dimly-lit steeply-tiered auditorium a voice from high up at the back said, "I would be prepared to try if the v.c. 11 people are ready to help". Everyone clapped spontaneously even though most did not know him. So it was that Pete Selby introduced himself. It transpired that he had been a B.S.B.I. member since 1987 and his IT and organisational skills made him ideal for the task. Pete lost no time in arranging training/recording meetings: he came to them all and encouraged the old hands to team up with, and help, the less experienced botanists. If the weather was clement these meetings might end in a pub garden. Pint in hand, plant identification became less daunting for the diffident. The team got to know Pete better and many new friendships were made. In the summer of 1999, when Paul Bowman died, Hampshire was left with no Recorder for v.c. 11 - who could ever replace Paul? Who would have the time? Fortune smiled on us: Pete had coped with the Atlas for three years and had got into the habit of supplying his helpers with computer printouts of the plants found in their allotted hectads together with helpful hints on plants to search for. He accepted the B.S.B.I.'s invitation to become Recorder for v.c. 11. Pete wrote his own database program and set about transferring Paul Bowman's vast set of paper records into electronic form. Subsequently he found out about another database program called Mapmate, which at the time was primarily for recording moths. Pete could see that the huge advantage of Mapmate was its ability to pool data by 'synchronisation'. He had been developing such a system for his own database program (and had already tested exchanging data on zip-drive discs). However, Pete saw the potential of Mapmate and joined forces with its developers to help add the full list of plant species and other features

desired by botanists. In 2002 Pete also became the B.S.B.I. Volunteers Officer, with many extra responsibilities, including the organisation of the national Local Change survey. By this time Pete had built up an army of volunteers to help with plant recording in v.c. 11. As many are of the fairer sex, Pete's wife, Jan, would often jovially refer to them as his harem.

Pete always enjoyed and appreciated the value of the annual B.S.B.I. Exhibition Meetings. He was thus prompted to arrange his own exhibition meetings in Bishopstoke Community Centre, where interesting specimens were brought and examined, and identification problems solved. Pete brought the Hampshire records on his lap-top for all to use, which proved highly popular. Jan provided tea and cakes and conversation flowed.

Pete died at the Chelsea & Westminster Hospital on 10 September 2003, after collapsing at the Natural History Museum on 3 September. In spite of his military background he was very much a quiet, gentle person, with a passion for plants and great love for his family. Sadly, he was just beginning to enjoy the pleasures of being a grandfather as his grand-daughter, Laura, was born to his daughter Sara in 2002.

Jan made a brave decision and asked the Hampshire Flora Group members back to Bishopstoke again on 15 November. She brought books from Pete's library and invited those present to choose one or two volumes as gifts in his memory. Sara and enchanting 20 month old Laura joined the group for those final poignant moments. It is to be hoped that Laura will, one day, learn of the esteem in which Pete was held.

Our thanks to Jan Selby for providing much of the material in this account.

(Much of the information in this obituary was published in *Flora News*, Newsletter of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trusts Flora Group, Spring 2004.)

TONY MUNDELL & ELIZABETH YOUNG

PHILIP MORGANS SMITH
(1941–2004)

Dr Philip Morgans Smith was Senior Lecturer in Plant Sciences at the University of Edinburgh, and with his death from pneumonia on January 14 2004, at the age of 62, the University of Edinburgh has lost a botanist of international stature, an inspirational teacher, a sympathetic counsellor and Director of Studies, an effective administrator and a real team-player.

Philip Smith was born in Halesowen, West Midlands, in 1941 and sadly his father died shortly afterwards. He was brought up by his mother and her parents and his early interests in Natural History were initiated by his grandfather who was a keen fisherman. In his boyhood years he explored the countryside with a young friend, collecting all manner of natural objects – stones, rabbit skulls, birds, fish, worms, eggs, leeches, lizards, frogs, molluscs, insects, animal droppings but above all plants – which were set out, labelled and exhibited in the garden shed that was founded as their 'Naturlist Club' (sic). He attended Halesowen grammar school from 1953–1959 and although an intending scientist from his early teens he continued with English and Latin throughout his schooling. The latter subject became invaluable to him as a taxonomic botanist. In his last two years at school he was taught biology by Eira Morgans. At school and later at Birmingham University he was a member of the Birmingham Natural History Society when Professor Hawkes was amassing the data for the first computer based flora of a British county. He graduated in 1962 from Birmingham University with a 1st class Honours B.Sc in Botany and proceeded to his Ph.D on *Bromus* under Professor J. Hawkes, which he obtained in 1965. The previous year, he and Eira Morgans were married, Philip adopting Eira's surname as his middle name, and together they went to California on a Harkness Fellowship to study under Professor Ledyard Stebbins in the Genetics Department at University of California, Davis. He was appointed assistant lecturer in the Botany department at the University of Edinburgh in 1967, and became a senior lecturer in 1981.



Philip did his utmost to stimulate and nurture a wider interest in plants at a time when the organism-based approach in biology had become unfashionable. He taught in all 4 years of the courses in Biological Sciences at University of Edinburgh, and also in the Diploma in Taxonomy and later the M.Sc course in Biodiversity and Taxonomy of Plants based at The Royal Botanic Garden. The M.Sc course was his creation, and has become the European, probably the world, market leader. So also was the Honours course in Plant Science of which he was Convener. He served for a time as convener of the Biological Board of Studies and introduced many innovations such as modularisation, designed to increase student choice among a burgeoning range of biological course options. Philip lectured with flair and style and on occasion was applauded by the first year students. His success in lecturing was the result of a complete synthesis of his wide interest in botany and his love of literature, together with his good baritone voice and perceptive wit. He had a remarkable ability to quote extensively from his favourite authors such as Dylan Thomas and A. E. Housman, and with speeches of Churchill he was a great mimic. Despite an enormous work load with teaching and committees he was never ruffled or spoke a sharp word.

Philip's outstanding contribution and dedication to teaching was acknowledged by the School of Biological Sciences when he was nominated in 2003 for the Chancellor's award for excellence in teaching. He was described by his Head of School as "the most outstanding teacher we have. He has the highest teaching loads in the School and consistently gets ratings from students which the rest of us can only aspire to achieve."

He also made important external contributions to biological education, notably as a member of The Scottish Schools Exam Board. He was at times convener and moderator for CSYS Biology; a member of The Scottish Central Committee on Science; Scrutineer for 10 years from 1990. In 1996 he was Consultant Principal Examiner in Sciences, Jordan Examination Reform Project. He was External Examiner, M.Sc. course in Taxonomy, University of Reading 1992–1996. He served on the Council of The Botanical Society of Scotland for many years, and as its President from 1989–91.

Philip supervised 16 research students and these, together with his M.Sc. students have contributed to the spread of broad taxonomic principles around the world. His own research, from which he was distracted by a frequently oppressive workload, was mainly concerned with the grass genus *Bromus*, on which he wrote about 20 papers and was the world authority. He was particularly interested in *Bromus interruptus*, now a rare, possibly extinct endemic weed species of sainfoin and hay-fields in south-east England. By 1973 seed held at Cambridge was no longer viable and it appeared that the species was finally extinct. It gave Philip much pleasure, at a B.S.B.I. conference in Manchester in 1979, to produce living plants grown from seed he had collected in Pampisford in 1963. In the 1960s he was one of the first to use serological techniques to distinguish between species in the study of their relationships, and used the method to demonstrate almost complete homology between the proteins of *Bromus interruptus* and *Bromus hordeaceus*. His book *Chemotaxonomy of Plants* (1976) proved valuable in advanced taxonomic courses. As a student he had collected data for the first computerised local flora – A Flora of Warwickshire, and over the last 20 years he galvanized members of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh (now Botanical Society of Scotland) into collecting data for a flora of the Lothians. Philip wrote several chapters of the resulting book “Plant Life of Edinburgh and the Lothians”, edited in collaboration with Dr R. O. D. Dixon and Dr P. Cochrane, which was published in 2002 by Edinburgh University Press, establishing a new datum point in local plant recording. It stands as a testament to his vision, energy and powers of persuasion.

In recent years Philip spent much of his free time on his narrow boat cruising along the canals of the English Midlands, the part of the world from which he hailed and forever had affection. He was very sociable and liked to discuss a wide range of topics over a pint or two at any local hostelry. On field courses it was not long before he was leading the singing after a hard day in the field. Everyone, students, colleagues and acquaintances alike, will remember him as a good and convivial friend, never happier than, over a glass of beer, discussing any subject under the sun, with perhaps forthright views but never a hint of rancour and always with much humour, frequently at his own expense. Many who knew him well will see his light in the following: “Here is the story of my name, which is Greek in origin (I predate the Duke of Edinburgh’s fame), meaning ‘lover of horses’. I do not like horses, very dangerous, though I am familiar with riding a camel. When I was born I was very ill, and expected to die. For very many weeks they didn’t bother to name me, therefore. But against the odds the wretched child survived, so they had to do something. No one could agree on anything. Eventually my father got fed up and decided the decision had to be made within a few minutes. His desperate eye fell upon the light bulb. ‘Philips’ it said. So here I am.”

There will be many times when we will be reminded of our encounters with Philip. It is sad that he has been cheated out of his well-earned retirement. He will be sorely missed but also remembered fondly and with gratitude by hundreds of students all over the world and by many others in the wider botanical community. He is survived by Eira and his sons Mansel and Lewellyn, to whom we extend our deepest sympathies.

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C. E. JEFFREE

FRANCIS WILLIAM SIMPSON
(1912–2003)

Francis Simpson was born in Asyut, Egypt on 15 September 1912; he died at a nursing home in Felixstowe on 10 November 2003. For more than sixty years he was the chronicler of the countryside and wild flowers of his native county of Suffolk.

Although he was born in Egypt, where his father was employed as an instructor in a training school, teaching leatherwork, the family returned to England whilst Francis was still a baby. They settled in the east of Ipswich and Francis lived in the same house for the rest of his life. Suffolk was his father's home county and grandfather Simpson's bakery business existed in Framlingham until fairly recent times. His father had also been a soldier in the Boer War and a Court Official in Colchester, but on his return from Egypt he decided to make a success of a market garden in Ipswich. However, the Great War intervened and he was called into service with the army again.

From his own accounts, it is clear that from childhood Francis had an insatiable appetite to go out and explore the countryside at every opportunity. His grandfather was also a naturalist and Francis recalled that his mother, a well educated lady, had a good knowledge of wild flowers. When the weather was fine she would take her two children on long walks out of town. He



Francis Simpson at his home in Ipswich

remembered often setting off with his mother and older sister at 4 a.m. to walk to places as far away as the coast at Butley or Shingle Street, returning home at 10 or 11 p.m. Father preferred to stay at home and sister sometimes experienced sore feet, but Francis had no such problems, he would walk a good deal more than the 30 odd miles that the ladies covered, for he would always race ahead to explore an interesting looking wood or pit.

His teachers at Ipswich School may have recognised his potential, for it was a Flora given to him by a schoolmaster that provided him with his first significant understanding about the plants of Suffolk. He matriculated in 1930, but did not go on to university. His competence as a botanist must surely have helped him gain a place on the staff of Ipswich Museum in 1930 and his skills as a photographer were also put to good use in documenting the collections. Through the Museum he soon came into contact with the Suffolk Naturalists' Society who recruited him as 'Phanerogamic Recorder' – a role he continued for the rest of his life. His early writings for the Society's journal show an elegant, poetic style (probably influenced by the S.N.S. Secretary and editor, Claude Morley) and although still in his twenties he was already complaining about the despoiling of the countryside when most contemporary naturalists were more interested in collecting. In 1938 he writes "*HEU, HEU, HEU! – What a glorious Easter-tide we had this year! Every prospect pleased but everywhere I go I find that Man is vile; everywhere our Suffolk is made more hideous to live in all the winter through; nowhere is Beauty maintained. ...Nor do I alone have eyes that see. Stanstead was my bourn yesterday; and some changes en route are too appalling to describe. Here, where Beauty companioned me all along the way but a dozen years ago, is sheer havoc.*" That same year, while recording flowers in the parish of Mickfield, Francis discovered that a small meadow famous for its Snakeshead Fritillaries was in the process of being drained and ploughed. He dashed off a characteristic letter to the East Anglian Daily Times, warning that "*the countryside is rapidly becoming less floriferous in this mechanical and destructive age, and naturalists must defend the heritage of beautiful wild flowers, unless our future flora is to comprise only aliens and weeds.*" An appeal raised £75, enough to purchase the field for the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves. Mickfield Meadow, one of the oldest nature reserves in the country, is now managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust – an oasis of meadow flowers in the midst of a vast arable desert.

In 1951 he joined the Botanical Society of the British Isles, taking on the role of Vice-County Recorder for both East and West Suffolk. His 52 years in this role are the longest service of any Recorder for the Society to date.

He despised the '*unnecessary use of the internal combustion engine*' and travelled the length and breadth of the county by train and bicycle. Never a great respecter of private property, he later bemoaned the lack of hedges and ditches along which he could creep without being seen. In 1989, when he was given a Ravis Vice-presidency by the S.N.S., Lord Cranbrook, President of the Society presenting the award, remarked that any landowner in Suffolk who considered that his estate was private hadn't reckoned with Simpson. In 1997 I was out walking in Tuddenham by the little bridge over the River Fynn when Francis (now aged 85) suddenly appeared with his old bike from behind some bushes clasping a specimen of Green Figwort *Scrophularia umbrosa*. I asked him how he would negotiate the stile with his heavy bike, whereupon he showed me where he had cut a small piece from the fence with a saw, just large enough for him to slip his bike through!

His lifestyle was frugal and he was garnering food from the countryside in the form of wild fruit, berries and fungi long before *Food for Free* had made these pursuits popular. After he retired from the Museum in 1977, he took full advantage of the extra time to get out into the field almost every day and continued to explore the county and make new records well into his eighties. Dressed in his woolly hat, thick tweeds and plastic mac (even in the heat of mid-summer) he was sometimes taken for a tramp. He was arrested and kept under armed guard on several occasions while investigating botanical habitats behind MOD fences. After one such incident he was amused to have his confiscated camera returned to his door complete with the film which had been nicely developed by courtesy of the Armed Services!

He strongly disliked field sports, and dismantled snares whenever he found them. He had a decidedly sweet tooth, an exceptional memory for plants and places, and was by turns opinionated, stubborn, cantankerous and loveable. Long before the end of his life he had become a treasured Suffolk institution.

By the time his flora was published in 1982, Francis knew his county and its plants as few have ever done before or since. The work of half a century of patient recording, it drew on other surveys, but was mainly his own work, a fact recognized by the Suffolk Naturalists' Society who published the work and insisted it be called *Simpson's Flora of Suffolk*. The book had a very long and difficult gestation. Francis was a self-taught botanist and greatly resented 'interference' from academics such as John Trist who chaired a committee S.N.S. had set up to try and bring the work to completion. As I mentioned last year in Enid Hyde's obituary, the final publication was in large part due to her patience and organisational skills in getting all Francis' materials sorted and the records up-to-date. The Flora, a classic of its kind, includes 285 of the author's own splendid photographs of plants in their natural surroundings and an elegant text in which the drastic changes seen in the countryside during his lifetime are described. John Dony's review in this journal includes a paragraph praising the 80 pages of colour plates which are such an important feature of the book:—

'The outstanding feature of *Simpson's Flora* is the inclusion of colour illustrations of the plants, 285 in all, making it without doubt the best illustrated Local Flora we have yet seen, or are likely to see, for many years to come. They reveal the author to be an even more superb plant photographer than we had already known him to be. I appreciated most the illustrations of plants shown in their natural surroundings, giving the reader a clear impression of the varied habitats in which wild flowers grow in Suffolk. Let no would-be compiler of a Local Flora be deterred by realising that inclusions of this nature are beyond his means!'

This last line is somewhat ironic – It cost £27,000 to produce in 1982 and, although S.N.S. co-ordinated the publishing, most of the money was raised through public subscription and 'pre-pub' offers. This did not raise enough to include much colour and Francis insisted on including the extra colour section and put in several thousand pounds of his own money.

Although he did not collect much herbarium material, he did amass a superb collection of several thousand photographs. He started in the 1930s using glass plates and continued to develop his own pictures throughout his life. The collection, mostly unlabelled, is now housed at Ipswich Museum; it includes many pictures of historic importance and will be an important resource for those studying habitat change. Francis was very careful about his records and rarely revealed the precise locations of rare plants. His notes usually only list the parish and the year of the record with the exact details only stored in his memory. He did not trust computers and was convinced that secrecy was the best protection. Whenever I tackled him on this issue, pointing out that managers and landowners could not protect sites if they did not know where they were he would always counter with examples of plants that had been destroyed by collectors or 'vandals'. I have great respect for the strength of his convictions and the trouble he was prepared to take to ensure precious sites were not revealed. In 1996 he was honoured with an M.B.E. for services to nature conservation.

Having grown up in the agricultural depression of the 1920s when much of the Suffolk farmland was left unploughed, his memories were of a countryside filled with flowers and bird song. Much of his adult life was spent decrying the destruction of that temporary paradise. He was a conservationist long before the word was invented. What drove his passion was the retention of a childlike pleasure in the beauty of the natural world. Populations of rare plants became like old friends whom he would revisit from time to time; he could always remember when and where he had first met them and mourned their losses as if they were family.

I can remember when I first met him, as a teenager taking my first plant (*Amsinckia micrantha*) for identification at the Museum shortly before he retired. His love of plants and dedication to their conservation have been an inspiration to me and many others working in the field.

MARTIN SANFORD