Watsonia, **11**, 419–421 (1977).

Obituaries

JAMES EDGAR DANDY
(1903–1976)

James Dandy was born at Preston in Lancashire on 24th September 1903 and was educated at Preston Grammar School and Downing College, Cambridge. After working for two years at Kew, he joined the staff of the Department of Botany at the British Museum (Natural History) in 1927 and served with great distinction (including ten years as Keeper of Botany) until his retirement in 1966, after which his botanical studies continued unabated until he became seriously ill in July 1976. He died at Tring on 10th November 1976.

Such are the vital statistics of a long and distinguished career and, since another obituary elsewhere will cover his role in international professional botany, it seems wise to restrict this short note to those aspects of his work that are of most direct relevance to the British flora. Although his expertise was widely known and appreciated, he was not personally well known to the membership of the B.S.B.I., and so I shall attempt to provide some glimpses of the man, rather than dwell in detail on his achievements.

Jimmy Dandy was a robust personality who, while never suffering fools gladly, would take great pains to help those who, like himself, wanted to get things right and were prepared to pay the price of excellence. He will be particularly remembered by members of the Society in three main contexts: water plants (especially, of course, *Potamogeton*), the Watsonian system of vice-counties and the nomenclature of the British flora. In the course of his work on *Potamogeton*, he examined countless specimens from museums, field botanists and recorders. All were meticulously recorded in a very large card index, which will be preserved for future consultation in the B.M. Department of Botany. Most botanists find Potamogetons difficult under ideal conditions; but when Dandy was asked to name material newly collected from the field, he used to delight in examining it through the semi-translucent 'flimsy' collecting cover. By seeing only a fuzzy outline, he was testing himself to the limit; but, even under this extreme self-imposed handicap, he usually got them right first time. This was in no sense 'showing off'—that would never have occurred to him; he really knew his plants and expected others to aim at similar standards of perfection. It is a great tragedy that we shall not now have the *Potomogeton* Handbook that had been planned. Like several other much-needed works, it was a victim of his own striving after ultimate accuracy and completeness; nothing was ever quite good enough for publication. His detailed investigation of the exact boundaries of the Watsonian vice-counties, which was published by the Ray Society, was an important service to British field recording, establishing once and for all the fossilized county boundaries as understood by Watson and their relation to later administrative areas, a matter of importance in the interpretation of old records and the establishment of new vice-county claims.

His reluctance to publish his own work was to some extent compensated for by the great pains to which he went in making improvements to the work of others, and, in the last analysis, he will probably be best remembered for his extraordinary expertise in the application of the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature*. In this, his outlook was decidedly pragmatic and, in spite of his own immense learning, was in no way tainted by pedantry or esoteric obscurities. Although in the minds of some British botanists he may be 'one of those who are always changing names', he was adamant in his stand for nomenclatural stability, which he believed could best be achieved by rigorous scholarship of the highest standard, a quality that he himself exemplified. In the course of a long involvement with the nomenclatural functions of the International Botanical Congresses, he was concerned with many initiatives aimed at the clarification of the Code and the promotion of stability. In the context of the British flora, he is best known for his *List of British vascular plants* (1958), which provided a unique basis for the nomenclature of our native flora.

Since its publication, he had maintained detailed files in which the nomenclatural pedigree of all the species is set out; copies of these are preserved in our Department and at the Botany School, University of Cambridge. Some further glimpses of the man at work may be of interest: as a young botanist I was continually amazed by his extraordinary facility in the use of the library, and there is no doubt that his close familiarity with the older literature was one of the factors that contributed to his great nomenclatural expertise. Seeing him at work, I was more than once reminded of a master organist at the console of his instrument. This may seem fanciful, but there was more than a passing resemblance as he effortlessly brought successive volumes into play while reaching a scholarly conclusion. At other times, as after a convivial lunch with some old botanical friend, he seemed more like a trapeze artist, performing amazing feats of mental gymnastics, yet always landing on his feet with a firm grasp on the elusive name that he was seeking.

Latterly he devoted much time and effort to the nomenclatural problems that arose from *Flora Europaea*, and the principal editors of this most significant enterprise have been among the first to pay tribute to him for the important contribution that his nomenclatural editing provided. A quotation from the *Tea Phytologist* (the Cambridge ephemeral, satirical botanical review) of Spring 1964 illustrates the unique veneration in which his nomenclatural skills were held by his contemporaries: 'We learn that Manuals are shortly to be exchanged for STD or Species Telephonic Dialling. The system is simple: just look up the Plant Number in the Gould Index and dial. You will then hear the recorded voice of J. E. Dandy giving the correct name, followed by the authority, reference to the original publication and a description. Initially there will be a choice of Latin or English. . . .'

The great standard oak of the British nomenclatural forest has fallen; those of us who were privileged to know him well will remember him with gratitude and affection. It remains to be seen if any of the junior saplings, who for so long have been sheltered by his expertise, can now grow so as to fill worthily the great gap in the canopy of British botanical scholarship.

J. F. M. CANNON

ALAN JAMES SOUTER
(1916–1976)

Alan Souter died on 22nd June, 1976, while 'mapping' by himself near Portsoy, Banffshire, with his notebook in one hand and his pencil in the other.

Born at Gourock, Renfrewshire, on 9th June, 1916, he graduated from Glasgow University with honours and became a teacher of mathematics. During the Second World War he served in the meteorological division of the R.A.F. and afterwards moved north to Buckie, where he taught mathematics at Buckie High School. There he became Senior Mathematics Master and Assistant Rector and was latterly in charge of the curriculum, a very exacting appointment.

Having been interested in plants from an early age, Alan Souter became one of the best field botanists in Scotland. Most observant in the field, he added many new records to the lists for Moray, Nairn and Easterness, refound *Saxifraga hirculus* in Aberdeenshire (after much searching) and was the first to find *Crassula tillaea* in Westerness. At the time of his death he was making detailed distribution maps for Banff, v.c. 94. He and his wife, Marion, accompanied me on many outings. He will be sadly missed, especially by those concerned with the plants of north-eastern Scotland.

M. McC. WEBSTER

WILFRED ERNEST WARREN
(1896–1976)

Wilf Warren died suddenly on 6th May, 1976, shortly before his 80th birthday. By profession he was an electrical engineer but since childhood he had had a great interest in natural history, botany in particular. His first notebook was written up at the age of 7, and in adult life (in addition to meticulous botanical records) he kept a naturalist's diary which makes most interesting reading. His last task was to bring this up to date.

He became a life member of the B.S.B.I. at the age of 21 and supported the Society by leading field meetings, recording for the Map Scheme and participating in plant surveys. His herbarium was left to the Haslemere Museum. Wilf was a committee member of the Surrey Flora Committee and one of the major contributors to the new Flora. He continued to help the Surrey botanists to the end, participating in their further work of site-recording and conservation. In addition he encouraged interested beginners by holding botany classes at his home.

In later years he took up bryology and, to a lesser degree, lichenology—this despite the fact that he had completely lost the use of his right arm and had the added disadvantage of being colour blind.

Born in Farnham, Wilf lived all his life in north-west Surrey and had an unrivalled knowledge of that region. The loss of such a person whose botanical knowledge and recollections stretch back over 70 years is irreplacable, and his many friends miss not only this expertise but also a cheerful companion who was always ready to give of his time and his knowledge.

J. E. SMITH