

Obituaries

CHARLES EDWARD HUBBARD (1900–1980)

A member of the Society since 1947 and made an Honorary Member in 1973, Charles Hubbard died on the 8th May, 1980, two weeks short of his 80th birthday. In the field of taxonomy and nomenclature, the name of Hubbard will always be associated with the grasses of the world. His contribution to this study was great, and, although retired for 15 years, he continued to work at the Kew Herbarium some five afternoons a week until his health broke in 1977. His final attentions were directed to the identification of bamboos and turf-grasses.

Charles Edward Hubbard, C.B.E., D.Sc., F.L.S., the son of Charles Edward Hubbard, was born at Appleton, Norfolk, on the 23rd May, 1900. His father was head gardener to Queen Maud of Norway and divided his time between the gardens at Appleton and the Royal Gardens at Bygdo in Norway. He encouraged young Charles to join him in his country rambles in search of plants to add to the gardens, and thus the seeds of the boy's botanical interest were sown.

He was educated first at West Newton School on the Royal Estate and later at King Edward VII Grammar School, King's Lynn. He decided on a career in horticulture and in 1916 started work in the gardens at Sandringham under Thomas Henry Cook. Here he received both practical and theoretical training in most branches of horticulture and subsequently passed the Royal Horticultural Society's examination in horticulture. In 1918–19 he had a short spell in the Royal Air Force and then returned and stayed at the Sandringham Gardens until April 1920, with the exception of five months in 1919 when he had the opportunity to assist his father in the replanning of the gardens of the King of Norway, near Oslo. In 1920, he entered the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, as an Improver Gardener, and he later became a Student and was posted for six months to the Temperate House. The opportunity of caring for a vast collection of plants aroused his interest in their classification. After two and a half years in the gardens, he was posted as Temporary Technical Assistant in the Herbarium. In this new field he served with other ex-student-gardeners including E. Nelmes, P. J. Greenway, W. E. Trevithick and C. F. Wilson. While helping the work of the professional botanists, Charles Hubbard soon gained an insight into the methods of identification and classification and how to use the library. During these early years at Kew, he attended evening classes, first at Richmond and later at the Chelsea Polytechnic (from 1923 to 1929).

In 1924, he travelled through south and central Spain with the Rev. E. Ellman and returned with some 1200 specimens for the Kew Herbarium. In the following year, he became Assistant to Dr Otto Stapf, a world authority on the Gramineae, and it was at this time that Charles Hubbard started to play his part in the naming and classification of grasses. In 1929 he was appointed Temporary Assistant Botanist at Kew, and in the following year, at the request of the Queensland Government Botanist, he went to Australia for a year to revise the nomenclature and to re-arrange the collection of Australian grasses in the Brisbane Herbarium. While there he made extensive collections of grasses from Queensland and other parts of Australia. He returned to Kew in 1931 and continued to assist Dr Stapf with the preparation of the account of grasses for the *Flora of Tropical Africa*.

In 1935, with the rank of Botanist, he was placed in charge of the Gramineae section of the Herbarium. During the 1939–45 War, Hubbard, together with F. Ballard, V. S. Summerhayes and W. B. Turrill, was evacuated to Oxford, where he helped to care for the part of the Kew collections temporarily housed in the Bodleian Library for safe keeping. While there, Hubbard served in the Home Guard from 1941–44 and, in his leisure hours, searched for interesting plants in the byways of Oxfordshire. In 1947 he was appointed Principal Scientific Officer; he was promoted to Senior P.S.O. in 1955, and two years later made Keeper of the Herbarium and Library. He was appointed Deputy Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in 1959, a position he held jointly with that of Keeper until his 'official' retirement in 1965.

His publications were mainly devoted to grasses and include a number of studies of new genera and species, mainly from Africa and Australia. Besides accounts of the grasses of Mauritius and of the Fiji Islands, which he completed with the help of R. E. Vaughan and V. S. Summerhayes respectively, he wrote two handbooks on East African grasses. He published about 150 papers on grasses, mainly in his earlier years. This writing was curtailed by his promotions, which diverted him from taxonomy to administration. Above all, Charles Hubbard will be remembered by our members for his Pelican book *Grasses*, which is a guide to the structure, identification and distribution of the grasses found in the British Isles. The first edition of 1954 was followed by a second in 1968. The product of many years of field observations and plant examinations, his text was complemented by the expert drawings of Miss J. Sampson.

He took great interest in various botanical societies; besides being a distinguished member of the B.S.B.I., his memberships included those of the Linnean Society of London, British Ecological Society, International Association of Plant Taxonomists, British Grassland Society, Systematics Association, Royal Horticultural Society and the Kew Guild.

He served on the Council of the Linnean Society from 1950 to 1953 and was Vice-President of the B.S.B.I. from 1964 to 1967, during which time he was Acting President following the death of E. F. Warburg; he was Treasurer of the British Ecological Society, and from 1960 to 1965 served on the Scientific Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society. In recognition of the many facets of his work and contributions to science, Charles Hubbard received many honours. For his work on the classification of grasses he was awarded the O.B.E. in 1954 and created C.B.E. in 1965. In 1960 the University of Reading conferred on him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science. He was awarded the Linnean Gold Medal in 1967. The Royal Horticultural Society twice honoured him, with the Veitch Memorial Medal and with a gold medal in 1970 for a special exhibit of 150 species of British grasses.

Hubbard revised the nomenclature of a number of foreign and British grasses. His name is immortalized in the British Gramineae by the hybrid *Festuca rubra* L. \times *Vulpia membranacea* (L.) Dum. = \times *Festulpia hubbardii* Stace & Cotton. It so happens that the genus *Festuca* was one of his favourites; he pressed descriptions of fescues to observe on his friends, and I gained the impression that he was not satisfied with our British list of fescues when compared with the longer European list.

Many people of all walks in botany will remember Charles Hubbard as a man who was kind and generous with his time and knowledge. In the field he had a gentle approach to correction; and when he realised he had a party of new disciples to the study of grasses, he would take infinite pains in demonstrating the intricacies of identification. Equally in his correspondence, in reply to the vast number of inquiries he received, he took much trouble in describing important characters in detail and giving references to reading. His enthusiasm for the vast family of the Gramineae never waned. Undoubtedly, he could have left an even greater record of the study of our British grasses. Notes on specimens and their habitats were carefully filed. His son John has recently estimated, from a cursory glance around his father's study, that there are about 10 feet of notes on grasses! This collection was probably destined for a third edition of his *Grasses*.

His own perfectionism prevented him from completing work until he was fully satisfied with his conclusions. In retirement, he admitted that he was always much in arrears of work, a situation which was also partly caused by his generosity to individuals. From the largest botanical institutions down to the single amateur grass enthusiast, all received attention from him. He could have written more to his own credit and to that of science; but he was anything but selfish, and delighted in helping anyone in the study of grasses. Both amateur and professional botanists all over the world are the poorer by his passing.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to his widow, Florence, and his son, John.

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P. J. O. TRIST

JOHN EARLE RAVEN
(1915–1980)

John Raven died in Cannock on 5th March, 1980, aged 65 years. He had been a member of the B.S.B.I. since 1943. The son of Canon Charles Raven, President 1951–1955, and descended through his

mother from the Wollastons, of whom no less than seven were Fellows of the Royal Society between 1723 and 1829, John was a naturalist by heredity, at first a lepidopterist and then, with his father, visiting and painting every plant in the British flora as then understood, a botanist. When I first met him, in the late 1940s, he was working his way through the *Hieracia*, and I am indebted to Mr P. D. Sell for the appended note on that particular exercise.

A brilliant classical scholar at Marlborough and later at Trinity College, Cambridge, John became a university lecturer in ancient philosophy and a Fellow first of Trinity and later of King's. As lecturer, as part-author of what is still the standard edition of the pre-Socratic philosophers, and as sole author of an introductory book on Plato, he showed an outstanding gift for lucid exposition; while his knack of instantly establishing easy relations with every kind of person made him a first-rate tutor of his College and won him numberless friends, so that, wherever his botanical trips took him, he always found hosts and companions. One of these was Dr S. M. Walters, whose temperament and stride both matched John's, so that collaboration produced that almost ideal volume, *Mountain Flowers*, in the New Naturalist series. John's contribution is remarkable for its sense of immediate experience and enjoyment. Another regular companion was Dr R. C. L. Burges of Birmingham, and it was John and 'Doc' who first really instructed me in field botany. To be in their company on the hills was exhilarating, for to their knowledge and flair they joined unfailing high spirits, and discovery and good jokes went hand in hand.

Though John always wore spectacles, he must have possessed extraordinarily keen sight, with an 'eye' for plants and for country that I have never known equalled. On a later expedition, to the Dolomites, as we drove rapidly along a mountain road, John cried out 'Stop!', and explained that on the cliff we had just passed he had spotted a *Phyteuma* that he did not know. When we walked back 200 yards, it was so. Again I have seen him, in an unfamiliar glen, fix, like a pointer, on a particular slope or cleft; and, if he said 'It will be there', it always was. With this instinct went a great power of deduction and of strategical planning, which enabled him, by a reconstruction of E. S. Marshall's route on the day when he found *Agropyron donianum* in Sutherland, to rediscover the plant. A more bizarre demonstration of these powers was the investigation, pursued with determination and gusto, that proved beyond reasonable doubt that many of the rarities reported from the Hebrides were not native there.

In 1954 John married Faith Hugh Smith and thereby won a settled place in the Highlands that he loved. Morvern with its hills and indented coastline, its wooded cliffs and moorland lochans, concentrates in narrow compass a remarkable variety of habitats and a rich assemblage of species. John busied himself with cataloguing them and made a number of exciting discoveries, notably of *Spiranthes romanzoffiana*. When the British Museum's survey, *The island of Mull*, was published, he was intrigued by the discrepancies between the flora of the island and that of the mainland, and set himself, with his usual careful planning of the operation, either to find the missing plants in Morvern or to explain their absence. The first-fruits of this investigation were published, alas too late for John to see them in print, in *Watsonia*, 13: 1-10 (1980).

By this time almost continuous ill-health had severely limited his own activity, and he enlisted many botanical friends as his scouts. Armed with plant-lists and explicit instructions on just where to look, Mark Hill, Nick Jardine, Michael Braithwaite, Max Walters, Peter Sell, Elizabeth Young, Joan Clark or I would be launched at a particular peak or remote glen, and on our return John's warm and humorous interest in all our adventures made our debriefing highly enjoyable. Then there were the botanical courses for which the vast house at Ardtornish provided an ideal centre. These courses were sometimes professional, as for the Cambridge Botany School or a party of Scandinavian bryologists, but more often miscellaneous and amateur; and if they included some to whom many of the Scottish plants were new, John would make it his personal duty and take endless pains to introduce the novice to the plant, for nothing pleased him more than to pass on his own enjoyment. When the class was all together, John would clamber rather laboriously up the lower slopes, shouting or signalling directions to his disciples foraging above; or, poised on the edge of a bog, his long lean figure characteristically crooked, would point out twice as many plants of *Hammarbya* as any of the rest of us had spotted.

John collected very few specimens, but many of the difficult plants he sent to experts to name have ended up in the Cambridge University Herbarium (CGE). In addition he invited Peter Sell to Ardtornish in 1970 and 1976 with the particular object of collecting voucher specimens of his discoveries, so that 255 sheets of Morvern plants are now in the Cambridge herbarium. His card index is to be duplicated, so that the records can be made available to all the interested parties. The possibility

of publishing John's paintings of the *Hieracia* is also being studied.

By his marriage John Raven became a gardener, and his book, *A Botanist's Garden*, describes the two gardens, in Cambridgeshire and in Morvern, that he and Faith spent much time and care in developing. The process included the introduction of a number of 'new' garden plants, especially from Crete, Corfu, and northern Italy. As the book's title indicates, John was first and foremost a plantsman, an appreciator of the special characteristics of particular plants. Like all good plantsmen he had his likes and dislikes: *Bergenia* was an abomination, *Helleborus*, *Euphorbia*, and *Artemisia* firm favourites. But his faculty for planning made him also skilled in garden design, and he took pride in being retained as consultant on municipal planting in Newcastle.

His last six months were made wretched by a persistent and debilitating virus; but in January, after a check-up in hospital, the doctors declared that it had almost burnt itself out, and John, full of hope and plans for the future, went off with Faith and two friends for a very happy holiday in Sicily. His sudden collapse, soon after his return, was quite unexpected, making our sense of loss all the more intense.

R. W. DAVID

P.D.S. adds: I first really got to know John Raven in the summer of 1953 when we went on a hawkweed trip, in company with his father, R. C. L. Burges, and Philip Oswald, which started in Gloucestershire, zig-zagged its way across Wales, scoured the Yorkshire limestones, and ended up at Teesdale. H. W. Pugsley's *Prodromus of the British Hieracia* had appeared in 1948. John had learnt his hawkweeds by looking them up in the field in Pugsley's listed localities. I had learnt mine by going through authentic specimens in the Cambridge herbarium. One would have thought that this would have brought about some differences of opinion, but the expedition was remarkable for the agreement we achieved and for the speed in which we found the species we were looking for. Most of this was due to the careful planning John put into the trip, his unparalleled facility for picking out species by 'non-botanical' characters, and by his intuitive interpretation of the terrain which led us unerringly to all the best spots. By the end of the trip we had seen 64 species, and this excluded all the leafy ones which were not yet in flower. Even more impressive was that father and son had between them painted nearly all the plants. Canon Raven would paint the leaves and stem while John was left the more arduous task of doing the details of the inflorescences. Evening after evening I would be tested out on whether I could identify the painted species from a distance of several feet, but so well were the characteristics of the hawkweeds depicted that no difficulties arose. By the end of the following summer nearly all the described species of *Hieracium* recorded for the British Isles had been found and painted. John's study of the *Hieracia* did not continue, but when from time to time he brought gatherings of hawkweeds into the Cambridge herbarium I had usually only to confirm, not name, them. In 1967 he joined Dr Cyril West and myself in describing a new species, *H. pseudanglicoides*, which he had first recognized as new many years before.