

Obituaries

ADRIAN LEONARD GRENFELL (1939–1991)

Adrian Grenfell was born on 6 April 1939 and died, aged only 52, on 17 November 1991. It was a great shock to hear from Adrian's wife, Diana, that my good friend had died of a heart attack whilst jogging. We had all known that he was not in the best of health, but none of us realised just how ill he must have been.

He and I have known each other for many years. We both attended the same Grammar School together, although at that time Adrian was not interested in botany. He left school to start a career with the Gas Board, later on changing to become an industrial chemist with a major Bristol company. Redundancy in the early 1980s allowed him to become a self-employed printer and later he moved into publishing. During the last seven years his expertise in printing and publishing was put to good use on behalf of the Bristol Naturalists' Society, the Wild Flower Society and the Botanical Society of the British Isles.

He became interested in plants in about 1972 (reference to the B.S.B.I. list of members shows he joined in 1976). At the same time he joined the Wild Flower Society and the local Bristol Naturalists' Society. He was keenly interested in mammals as well as plants and would often attend meetings of the Mammal Section of the Bristol society. In the early days alien plants became his main interest, brought on possibly by his friendship with Eric Clement, and Adrian became what is known as a 'Tip Man'. He and I, often in the company of other botanists including Clive Lovatt and Trevor Evans, would frequently visit such sites as Brislington Tip, Bedminster Tip, Avonmouth, Newport and Sharpness Docks, and other localities where aliens were to be found. Reference to the 'Bristol Botany' section in *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society* and *B.S.B.I. News* shows the many interesting finds made during that period. He had to wait a long time to get into the now Portbury Docks – so jealously was it watched. We were making comparisons all the time with N. Y. Sandwith's 1933 adventive plant list from the Port of Bristol – at one time Adrian intended to publish an updated check-list.

On the local scene botanists eagerly looked forward to Adrian's walks in the Bristol area. He would lead us round such famous localities as the Avon Gorge, Leigh Woods, Brean Down and the Mendip Hills. He was always pleased to help both the 'starters' and the more experienced botanists with determinations. Adrian's hybrids caused some amusement: so often, however, they were confirmed by the correct authority. He truly had a remarkable eye for the unusual.

In the early 1980s Adrian and I were to enjoy several trips abroad to look at plants, sample local wine, etc. I can always remember Adrian one evening dropping off to sleep in a chair after a hard day's collecting and then determining in Portugal, with a volume of *Flora Europaea* in his lap and a glass of wine in his hand. After that we decided that after one bottle in the evening all determinations were suspect! We enjoyed trips to Crete, the Algarve, Mallorca and Scotland; later on Adrian went to Zakynthos and Mt Olympus in Greece, the Alps (where he led B.S.B.I. excursions), the Seychelles and Australia. All the time he was looking for interesting plants and would always bring back something, usually grasses for his friends Ron Payne and Eric Clement.

From April 1983 Adrian took over the Alien News section in *B.S.B.I. News* from Eric Clement, editing it for eight years (see *B.S.B.I. News* 32–57). Adrian would look forward to his mail and would eagerly open packages of carefully pressed specimens and examine the soggy contents of polythene bags to see what was new. Many of these specimens have been kept and are preserved in his herbarium. Adrian was at the same time helping the Society in other ways. In 1983 he was on the Meetings Committee and helped to organize the A.G.M. in Bristol, arranging accommodation and the field excursions to the Mendips and Sand Point in Somerset, a very memorable day. In April 1991, his successor as editor of *Aliens and Adventives*, Brian Wurzell, thanked Adrian for his valuable contribution and wished him a speedy recovery from the illness which caused him to resign from the work. Sadly, Adrian only lived a further six months.

In 1979, one year after Early Star-of-Bethlehem (*Gagea bohemica*) was confirmed as occurring at

Stanner Rocks in Radnorshire, Adrian, Trevor Evans and myself went to the site, on a wintry February day with snow in the air, and were rewarded by the sight of two flowers of this plant new to the British flora. We knew that the next weekend Mary Briggs and a party of eminent botanists were to visit the site – so new was it to the British flora. Adrian decided to leave a note addressed to Mary under a stone to record that we had been there and to advise where the flowering plants were to be seen. Mary found the note. Adrian later remembered this occasion when he found the same plant high up above the Samaria Gorge in Crete.

In 1987, Adrian wrote a paper on the notable alien flora of the Avon Gorge, which was included in *The Avon Gorge*, Special Issue No. 1 of *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society*. This was elegantly produced by Grenfell Publications and offered for sale to B.S.B.I. members. Other publishing ventures included several editions of the *Proceedings*, the *Supplement of the Flora of Gloucestershire* by S. C. Holland, H. M. Caddick and D. S. Dudley-Smith (1986) and *The difficult and critical plants of the Lizard District of Cornwall* by L. J. Margetts (1988). Every year Adrian would send Professor A. J. Willis, the Bristol Botany recorder, many interesting records – all these can be found in the *Proceedings* or in *B.S.B.I. News*. In the autumn of 1991, Adrian and I had just finished an article on Bristol street trees, which will be published in the *Proceedings* in due course. We had great fun driving up and down the streets of Bristol, identifying, collecting and determining material of a vast range of trees.

There is one plant that will always remind me of Adrian. It is not an alien but the British native, Autumn Lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*). It was found by him growing on Eric Clement's Gosport lawn – and Eric had never seen it. Adrian always said with a grin that it would have to be flat or mounted on a sheet for Eric to notice it!

On the basis of his work on alien plants, Adrian was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London in 1982. His private herbarium will be transferred to Bristol City Museum (**BRISTM**) and kept there alongside those of other distinguished Bristol botanists such as I. W. Evans and J. W. White.

Over the years Adrian built up a tremendous number of friends, many of whom stayed with him when they visited the Bristol area. He was always willing to help in any way that he could. Adrian's warm friendship and dry humour will be missed by us all, particularly when we revisit a site where he had shown us a speciality. We extend our sympathies to Diana and his son James.

T. TITCHEN

WILLIAM ARTHUR SLEDGE (1904—1991)

Arthur Sledge was a Leodiensian. He was born in Leeds on 14 February 1904 and died there on 15 December 1991, having lived there all his life. He was educated at Leeds Grammar School and graduated from the Botany Department of Leeds University in 1926. He gained his Ph.D. in 1928, the year he joined the staff of the department as a Demonstrator. He was appointed as a Lecturer a year later and eventually became a Senior Lecturer. After his official retirement in 1969 he retained a room in the department and continued his work there as Honorary Research Fellow, usually walking the 3 km from his home in Headingley. A severe heart attack two years ago restricted his physical activities but he bore the resulting debilities uncomplainingly and with fortitude.

His interest in botany was triggered at his junior school by a pressed flower competition, which, of course, he won. While he was out collecting specimens, his vasculum was spotted by Frank Palmer who was taking part in a similar senior school competition. Frank and his father subsequently introduced the young Sledge to the joys of botanising on the Permian Magnesian Limestones a few kms east of Leeds. From this was born an awareness of habitat and an interest in ecology and he was later to become a founder member and council member of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust (now the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust).

Whilst still in his early teens, Dr Sledge had found F. A. Lees' *Flora of West Yorkshire* (1888) in

the library and, learning that Dr Lees lived quite nearby, he became a frequent visitor to his home, armed with eggs from his mother's hens and a vasculum of plants for identification. In 1941, *A Supplement to the Yorkshire Floras by the Late F. Arnold Lees*, edited by C. A. Cheetham and W. A. Sledge, was published.

In 1920 Dr Sledge was introduced to Leeds Naturalists' Club by the blind botanist, John Wilkinson. Active members of the club at that time, who all helped to further Dr Sledge's interest, included such famous names as J. H. Priestley, Professor of Botany at Leeds, W. H. Pearsall, Edward Percival, R. W. Butcher, and the bryologist, W. H. Burrell.

It was standard practice at Leeds Naturalists' Club to report on Yorkshire Naturalists' Union meetings and Dr Sledge was inspired to join the Union. All the most knowledgeable naturalists in the county belonged to the Union and from them much was gleaned. Later he more than repaid what he had gained. In the field he was the ultimate authority who could be relied upon to give a correct identification to all but the most esoteric of critical plants, along with interesting comments on habitat and plant associations. His memory for sites of interest was unfailing, even those he had not visited for 40 years and, when he felt there was good reason to give directions to them, these directions were precise and accurate. All of us were in awe of him, but those who showed an intelligent interest and desire for knowledge were subsequently greeted with a warm smile and questions were answered fully, with quiet enthusiasm. In addition to sharing his experience in the field, Dr Sledge edited the Union's scientific publication, *The Naturalist*, from 1943 to 1975. His dedication and skill resulted in *The Naturalist* being read and respected nationally and internationally and, in spite of his modest, unassuming manner, his pride in it and his paternalism towards it were evident.

He joined the B.S.B.I. in 1924 and was appointed Recorder for South-east, South-west and Mid-west Yorkshire in 1949. He relinquished South-east Yorkshire to Eva Crackles in 1969 and continued with South-west and Mid-west until 1987, when failing eyesight made him realise he would not be able to cope with the Monitoring Scheme. In 1987 he was made an Honorary Member of the Society for his "long and valuable service to Yorkshire botany and to the Society as Recorder and Editor". He had edited the Distributor's Report (Exchange Section), which was a supplement to the Society's *Year Book*, in the late 1940s. With our present emphasis on conservation this aspect of the Society's activities has developed into Plant Records.

Dr Sledge was very much a Yorkshireman but he was by no means parochial. During his undergraduate days, much of his travel outside the 'Broad Acres' was by bicycle, accompanied by R. W. Butcher. This included visits to East Anglia, the Gower, the Avon Gorge and Dorset in search of their special plants. In those days specimens were picked and contributed to Dr Sledge's enormous and excellent herbarium. The British sheets were donated several years ago to Bradford Museums Service and they now reside in Cartwright Hall Museum (CMM) along with those of Lees. The foreign material is widely distributed internationally.

Dr Sledge was one of those lucky individuals able to combine his interest with his career. His first publication was a contribution to the report of the British Association meeting which was held in Leeds in 1927, for which he wrote sections on the flora of Fountains Abbey, Wharfedale, Nidderdale and Malham. This was followed a year later by his Ph.D. thesis on the rooting of woody cuttings. He travelled widely in Europe and, for research purposes, visited New Zealand, Madeira, Sri Lanka and Samoa. His work was concerned mainly with systematics and, following his first visit to Sri Lanka, he untangled the difficult taxonomy of the native ferns. His paper, written in association with the late Professor Irene Manton, entitled *Observations on the cytology and taxonomy of the Pteridophyte Flora of Ceylon*, published in 1954, remains a classic. Other papers on the taxonomy of tropical ferns followed, as well as numerous articles on aspects of the Yorkshire flora. All his work was carried out with meticulous care and his clear systematic presentation made him a first-class teacher. Even during his period of ill-health, Dr Sledge continued to work. He recently completed an excellent historical review for the forthcoming *West Yorkshire Plant Atlas* to be published by the West Yorkshire Ecological Advisory Service, and he was still collaborating with Professor R. E. Schultes, formerly of Harvard University, on a Symposium to commemorate the centenary of the death of Richard Spruce (1817–1893) pioneer botanist in the Amazon and Andean regions. Professor Schultes and Dr Sledge shared a deep respect for this little-known Yorkshire botanical explorer and they were instrumental in having a commemorative plaque put on the cottage in the Castle Howard estate where Spruce had lived.

We in Yorkshire have lost our most outstanding contemporary botanist, and one of the best in Britain, and we mourn him along with Marjorie, his wife, who has supported him wonderfully since their marriage in 1939. We offer sincere sympathy to her and to their son, Christopher, and his family.

P. P. ABBOTT