

Obituaries

JOHN HESLOP-HARRISON (1920–1998)

One of the most innovative botanists of our time, John Heslop-Harrison will be sadly missed by his colleagues and admirers. He held three professorships (Belfast, Birmingham and Wisconsin), in addition to visiting professorships and many medals, fellowships and honorary degrees from learned societies and universities.

In addition to being Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (1971–76) he kept up a strong research programme, often with his wife Yolande and his son Pat, with some 300 publications in learned journals. I had the privilege of knowing him and working with him during his time at Birmingham (1960–67), and admired him greatly.

In his early days he worked on orchids, especially the dactylorchid populations in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, some of his work being published jointly with his father, J. W. Heslop-Harrison. He was also interested in the general aspects of Irish vegetation and post-glacial history. His book entitled “New Concepts and Flowering Plant Taxonomy” (1953) was an important landmark in plant evolution and classification concepts.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s he was publishing, with his wife, Yolande on flowering-plant growth and organogenesis as shown in *Cannabis sativa* and other plants. He was also experimenting on apomixis and aspects of photoperiodic effect, and that of growth hormones, on sexuality and development. This led in the mid-1960s to investigations on pollen growth, cell walls and chloroplast structure, as well as sex expression in flowering plants. Thus, he was never content to describe *what* he saw but needed as a true scientist to investigate *why* it took place and the mechanisms which controlled such phenomena. These aspects of *why* and *how* things took place were published by him and with several of his research students and his wife in the mid- to late-1960s. Thus, the *what* of taxonomy led to the *why* of physiology – what and why certain morphological and physiological phenomena took place. Many of these publications showed collaborative work with his students, particularly with Bruce Knox and Hugh Dickinson. He was always anxious to indicate his collaborators, though naturally the impetus came from Jack himself.

In the 1970s Jack’s interest turned even more to the *why* and *how* of processes such as pollen-stigma interaction, incompatibility, and organelles, this work being the result of constant collaboration with Yolande. At this time he also wrote on the ever more important topic of species and ecosystem conservation, though at the same time, and into the 1980s, he was still investigating pollen growth and pollen-stigma interactions (again, with Yolande), as well as the phenomenon of heterostyly.

Jack Heslop-Harrison’s contact with the B.S.B.I. will be well-known to older members, and particularly to those interested in dactylorchids and flora studies of Britain. His work and interests in so many other aspects of plant studies also will not be forgotten.

Jack died of a heart attack on May 7th, 1998. Our deep sympathy goes out to his wife Yolande, his son Pat and other family members.

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J. HAWKES

OLGA MARGARET STEWART

(1920–1998)

Olga Margaret Stewart (*née* Mounsey), who died on 6 August 1998, was inextricably linked with the botany of Scotland. She had been a member of both the B.S.B.I. and the Wild Flower Society since 1965, and soon became close friends with Mary McCallum Webster, who had just settled in Morayshire. Olga was quick to learn from her mentor and, as her knowledge increased, so did her enthusiasm. In 1975 she was invited to become Recorder for the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright (v.c. 73), and it is for her thorough work there that most of her British botanical friends will remember her.

She was born in Edinburgh on 1 July 1920. Her father was an Edinburgh lawyer, James L. Mounsey, and her mother a Canadian from Nova Scotia. Her first school was in Edinburgh and at the age of 12 she moved to a boarding school in Kent, where she had a successful career, winning several academic prizes and representing the school at hockey, lacrosse and tennis, and ending up as joint Head Girl. She returned to Edinburgh to study architecture at the Art College, and at the end of her first year was on holiday in Nova Scotia visiting her grandfather when World War II broke out. It was decided that she should stay there, and she enrolled into Dalhousie University in Halifax, where she found herself the only female studying Engineering. Her professors soon noticed her drawing capabilities and, after a year, they offered her a job with the National Research Council of Canada in the Naval Dockyard at Halifax. When the first German acoustic mine was discovered and defused off the coast of Nova Scotia, it was Olga who was given the task of producing sectional drawings of it for military scientists to study.

In 1943, in spite of hostilities both in the North Atlantic and Western Europe, Olga decided to return to the U.K. and was given a research job with the Royal Navy in Edinburgh. Three years later, on 28 November 1946 in Edinburgh, she married Frank Stewart, a pre-war friend who had spent the last five years as a Prisoner of War in Germany; they enjoyed a very happy life together for over 51 years. Frank was yet another Edinburgh lawyer, so it was there, in between bringing up four children, that Olga started on her botanical 'career'. This had a curious beginning. In 1947 she and Frank went on their first holiday together, to Aviemore, where, as she wrote later, (1983. *Wild Flower Society Magazine* 39: 15) "*While climbing a hill, rather slowly and rather pregnant I collected flowers on the way and sat down to draw them ... So began my passion to draw practically every plant, wild and naturalised that I have seen since*". Her reputation as an artist soon spread and she was asked to draw black-and-white flower illustrations for books and journals. Examples are to be found in McCallum Webster's *Flora of Moray, Nairn & East Inverness* (Aberdeen University Press, 1978), and the late Princess Grace of Monaco's book, *My Book of Flowers* (Doubleday, 1980), and many other articles on British plants. Most recently (1997), she drew the involucre of British dandelions in the B.S.B.I. Handbook 9, by Andrew Dudman and John Richards; to use the authors' own words, "*She has graced the present volume with delightful and accurate drawings ... and we thank her for the dedication and hard work that these have entailed*". She also left, unpublished, a number of hawkweed drawings, and a collection of water-colour drawings of more than 3000 British plants, which is indeed unique, and well worth publishing in its own right. Her drawing of the bluebell has become well-known being incorporated into the Society's logo.

It is Olga's botanical fieldwork in Kirkcudbrightshire for which she will be best remembered. She and Frank had enjoyed summer holidays around New Abbey for some years and in 1962 had the opportunity to build a holiday home, 'West Maryfield', on the north-east of the village. She had got to know the local flora well, so on Dr Humphrey Milne-Redhead's demise in 1974, she was the obvious choice to carry on as B.S.B.I. Recorder for the vice-county. Characteristically, she took up her duties seriously and enthusiastically, scouring the area from the top of the Galloway Hills to the Solway, often three days a week between March and October, sometimes alone and sometimes with friends. Her *Check List of the plants in Kirkcudbrightshire* was published in 1990, by the Dumfries & Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society, of which she was an active member. Her card index with detailed records and her maps at tetrad level destined for later publication will be completed, we must hope, and brought to fruition. Stimulated by the lack of expertise available to identify problems in the smallreed (*Calamagrostis* spp.) complex she took up the cudgels and studied plants from elsewhere in Britain and Europe (including type specimens) in the National Herbaria at Edinburgh and the Natural History Museum, London. She became the B.S.B.I. Referee for the group and the characters she listed as useful for the five species in 1988 were re-published in the *Plant Crib* 1998, as being still the authoritative account.

Paintings, publications and records are lasting tributes to some of her endeavours which can be enjoyed by those that study plants in the future. But to the large coterie of friends she leaves behind – the many who enjoyed hospitality at West Maryfield, on their way from the South to northern Scotland – it will be those warm and happy memories of botanical forays, long walks to re-find a rare plant, or to check the status or identity of an old record; memories of botanical discussions in the kitchen, poring over maps and checking grid references over pre-dinner gins and tonic, unobtrusively administered by Frank, whose silent support for all she did allowed Olga to develop

her hobby to the full. After dinner, there would be the checking of taxonomic queries with lens or microscope, and Olga would carefully put those little vouchers, invariably shrivelled, into the plant-press which, when dry, would be sent to specialists at home or abroad to confirm the record; or taken to the R.B.G. at Edinburgh to compare with herbarium material. Then, later in the evening, replete in body and relaxed in mind, her guests would retire, leaving Olga sketching a wanted plant before the petals fell or dried. Next morning she was the first up, and breakfast (and packed lunch!) would be ready by the time we came down.

If Olga thought a species should be in 'her area' she would not rest until it was found, and confirmed. Invariably she succeeded, or manoeuvred her botanical friends into the right habitat so that they could "find" it. I don't know how many scraps of *Dryopteris dilatata* I was shown before the true mountain buckler fern (*D. expansa*) was found, but found it was! The challenge at the time of her death was to find the hybrid between *Isoetes echinospora* (not common in Kirkcudbrightshire) and *I. lacustris*. This enthusiasm for something new was infectious, and her presence at any meeting was welcomed with real pleasure. The B.S.B.I. Exhibition Meetings in Scotland were never, or rarely, missed, and for many years she also regularly attended – and exhibited at – the Society's Annual Meeting in London. On the rare occasion when she did not, her absence was the concerned comment of many who had looked forward to seeing her. Over a period of 50 years she acquired a great knowledge of flowers, and she was, without doubt, one of the best field botanists in Scotland, if not Britain. She was concerned about nature conservation and encouraged landowners and other environmental managers to do their best for plants. As a Regional representative on the B.S.B.I. Conservation Committee for S.W. Scotland, she was particularly concerned about the water management at Loch Ken, and produced a thorough survey of the area (1988. *Transactions of the Dumfries & Galloway Natural History & Antiquarian Society* 63: 1–4) to draw attention to the plight of the pillwort (*Pilularia globulifera*).

Olga was always interested, too, in other people, young and old alike, and from time to time worked for charities helping elderly people. She helped run a Badminton Club for young people in Edinburgh in the 1960s but her main sporting love was curling. She joined the Edinburgh Ladies Curling Club in the mid-1950s and, as in everything she took up, she soon became an expert. Olga won many competitions and, in 1967, was chosen to go on a curling tour of Western Canada, from Winnipeg to Victoria, as one of 20 ladies representing Scotland. She was forced to retire from curling only two years ago, after slipping and hitting her head on the ice.

She had the ability to impart her great knowledge of botany to beginners in her own unassuming way; she always saw the good side of a person's character and never criticised others. Her integrity and generosity of spirit is something that all of us who have had the good fortune to know her will remember most. Olga leaves husband Frank, daughter Rosemary, and sons Alan, John and Nick, the last of whom, having graduated in Geology at Cambridge, followed in her footsteps and is now a professional botanist in his own right. They, and their families, have lost a loving wife, mother and grandmother and our sympathies are with them. There are also botanical friends who have enjoyed many a happy day exploring Kirkcudbright with Olga. We too have lost a most knowledgeable and lovable field companion.

A. C. JERMY

KARL-HEINZ RECHINGER PHIL. DOC. (VINDOB.) FMLS
(1906-1998)

Karl-Heinz Rechinger, author of *Flora Aegaea*, founder, editor and for many parts also author of *Flora Iranica*, died in Vienna on 30 December 1998, aged 92. He has increased our knowledge of the flora and vegetation of the Balkan peninsula and South-west Asia more than anyone in this century. Since 1938 he has been a member of the B.S.B.I., and was later elected to honorary membership. The combination of three qualifications made Rechinger a most remarkable man. He acted for almost 35 years as director of the Department of Botany at the Natural History Museum in Vienna and for eight years served as "Erster Direktor" of that institution. At the same time he was also a prolific scientist who left behind a vast oeuvre of the highest merit with scores of new taxa described, of which many have stood the test of time. Thirdly, Rechinger was an extremely active plant collector who repeatedly travelled to some of the remotest corners of the world.

When the first instalment of *Watsonia* was published in January 1949 it contained a contribution by Rechinger which had first been presented at a meeting of the British Association in Dundee. Entitled "Lines of evolution and geographical distribution in *Rumex* subgen. *Lapathum*", its introduction offers a good insight into his mind: "The docks, having no showy flowers, do not awake aesthetic feelings as do, for instance, brightly coloured flowering plants or plants distinguished by a particular habit. The more intimate beauty which lies in the various shades of red, brown and yellow of the ripe fruiting panicles, contrasting with the dull green willows accompanying the river banks is not so obvious. Nevertheless it belongs undoubtedly to the general impression of a landscape in autumn. On the other hand, when looked at with a certain attention the amazing variability in size and shape of the inner perianth segments at the fruiting period offers a great deal of pleasure".

Pleasure meant for Rechinger travelling and collecting plants in dry habitats, with the Aegean area and the Near East being his favourite hunting grounds. Travelling in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan was as that time an uncomfortable experience and required much dedication. He has brought home more than 100,000 collections, mainly flowering plants, many in several duplicates, and almost always deposited the first set in the Natural History Museum in Vienna. Pleasure meant for Rechinger analysing the endless variety of plant life, and describing it with great care and accuracy, *Cousinia*, *Rumex* and *Salix* being among his special friends. But pleasure also meant for Rechinger synthesising his observations and those of others in Floras, of which he produced three: *Flora Aegaea*, his first magnum opus, published in 1944; *Flora of Lowland Iraq*, printed in 1964; and his second magnum opus, *Flora Iranica*, of which the first fascicle came out in 1963. So far 173 fascicles have been published, a most remarkable achievement, with the treatment of a single family, a single tribe, and a single, albeit large, genus (*Astragalus*) still outstanding. A eulogy in *Annalen des naturhistorischen Museums in Wien* 75:1-16 (1971) and a paper in *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 89B: 3-5 (1986) are major sources of information about his numerous publications.

Rechinger visited England and Scotland several times, maintaining long-term contacts with several botanists, notably at Edinburgh and Kew. Through his close co-operation with Peter Davis, editor of *Flora of Turkey and the East Aegean islands*, he strove for consistency with *Flora Iranica* despite there being, at times, varying perceptions of taxonomic rank. For many members of the B.S.B.I. he was their first contact when dealing with queries concerning the very rich holdings of the Natural History Museum in Vienna. There was a considerable involvement of British botanists in *Flora Iranica*: the account of Papaveraceae was written by J. Cullen, Rutaceae by C. C. Townsend, Guttiferae by N. K. B. Robson, Capparidaceae, Aizoaceae and Molluginaceae by I. C. Hedge and J. Lamond, Gramineae by N. L. Bot, several mainly aquatic monocot families by J. E. Dandy, and Balsaminaceae by C. Grey-Wilson. Several British botanists (A. J. C. Grierson, I. C. Hedge, J. Lamond, J. A. Ratter and P. F. Yeo) also contributed generic treatments to individual families, and the most recently published two fascicles of *Flora Iranica* were edited by I. C. Hedge instead of the ageing Rechinger. Some of his expeditions to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran were done in the company of two Scottish botanists, I. C. Hedge and J. Lamond.

Rechinger was one of the original advisory editors to the monumental *Flora Europaea* project, and although his original contributions were restricted to accounts (notably *Salix* and *Rumex*) in the first volume, published in 1964, his works on the Flora of Greece continued to provide a major foundation for studies of the flora of that country.

Rechinger grew old enough to be able to reap what he had sown, and he could reflect many of his undertakings in two autobiographical papers transmitting something of the flavour and fascination of travelling in the Levant and the Near East. They were published in the *Annales Musei Goulandris* in 1978 and the *Davis & Hedge Festschrift* in 1989 by Edinburgh University Press. Music was also very important to him, both playing the piano and listening to classical music, a pleasure from which deafness deprived him late in life.

Apart from many other distinctions like the Omajou Order Third Class from the Shah of Iran, Rechinger was honoured by being elected Foreign Member of the Linnean Society of London in 1966 (restricted to 50 botanists and zoologists), and was appointed an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1987. His many friends will remember his benevolent, gentlemanly nature and his puckish yet kindly sense of humour. He is survived by his widow, Wilhelmina, without whose support in all facets of his life he would never have achieved so much.

without whose support in all facets of his life he would never have achieved so much.

His was a very rich and remarkable life, reaching the utmost end of what nature has accorded to man. British botany, and British botanists with their colleagues on the Continent and worldwide, will miss Karl-Heinz Rechinger.

H. W. LACK