

Obituaries

MICHAEL WALPOLE F.C.A., F.L.S.
(1933–2009)

Born in the Leicestershire market town of Loughborough on 13 February 1933, Mike Walpole was a rare man who maintained a 50 year long involvement in the natural history and conservation of the wildlife of his home county, while also establishing himself as a leading figure on the national scene too. He also somehow managed to do all of this while holding down a senior position in the business world, as well as being a devoted family man. Mike was married to his wife Ann for more than 50 years and had two children and four grandchildren.

Educated at Loughborough Grammar School, Mike qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1955. Four years later he joined Towles Ltd, a Loughborough hosiery company, where he worked until his retirement in 1994. By that time he had become Financial Director and Company Secretary. A big man with a larger than life personality, Mike Walpole had personalized number plates on his Mercedes cars and he was well known for his liking for red wine and cigars. A gifted pianist at school, he later played the organ for services at Emmanuel Church, Loughborough, but much of his life outside of work revolved around natural history.

It was in the early 1960s that a dynamic and prolific group of local naturalists formed the Loughborough Naturalists' Club. Mike Walpole was one of them, becoming a member of the Club in 1961 and serving as Meetings Secretary, Chairman and Bryophyte Recorder. In 1962 Mike was elected a member of the Council of the Leicestershire Trust for Nature Conservation (later the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust), serving for a remarkable 46 years until 2008. From 1964–1975 he was Honorary Secretary of the Trust and Chairman from 1975–1986. It is clear that in the 1960s and 1970s Mike was in the centre of all that was happening in nature conservation in Leicestershire and that he was hugely influential. He wrote the chapter on nature conservation in a major work on the county (Pye 1972), in which his knowledge and vision for the future shines through. It is particularly interesting to note his focus on the

need for more educational facilities and places to provide 'stimulation to growing minds and refreshment to tired men and women from cities and towns'. There was concern that people might otherwise only have access to 'barren, drab and unstimulating acres of land'. The Trust's files show that Mike was forthright in his desire to conserve special places, on behalf of the Trust, never fearing a fight. While he and others were able to secure some fine nature reserves, much else was lost and Mike was clearly affected by this, saying at a low moment years later that 'no-one cares'.

Nevertheless, Mike's personal contacts continued to be hugely beneficial to the Trust and in 1997 he persuaded a local charity to donate £75,000 towards the purchase of a substantial part of Loughborough Big Meadow, one of the largest and last remaining Lammas meadows in Britain. During the 1990s he was also Chairman of the Charnwood Wildlife Project, a joint initiative between the Trust and Charnwood Borough Council, for a number of years.

Mike was a constant presence on the Trust's Conservation Committee too, but his real love was for its Charnwood Lodge Nature Reserve. Established in 1961 as the Shirley Clarke Nature Reserve, Mike was instrumental in persuading the late Miss C. Clarke to bequeath the reserve to the Trust in 1972 and it subsequently became known as Charnwood Lodge Nature Reserve. Covering nearly 500 acres, this is one of the largest inland nature reserves in the Midlands, but Mike was totally unmoved when it was declared a National Nature Reserve in the 1990s, concerned that enhanced status might result in more visitors than could be catered for and unwanted government regulation.

Charnwood Lodge is a wonderfully wild place, a constant surprise for visitors from outside of Leicestershire. Mike was determined to keep it wild and had promised Miss Clarke that its character would not be changed, for example through recreational use. His fierce protection of the site did not endear him to some, but almost 50 years on the site retains that essential wild character. Adoption of an



Mike Walpole driving a tractor, c. 2005.

almost siege mentality had almost certainly partly come about because of what Mike had seen happening to other good places in the county and his concerns were only reinforced in the early 2000s when much of the reserve, to Mike's dismay, was declared access land under the CRoW Act. His early optimism for nature conservation was further severely dented when officials showed little concern for the potential for unrestricted public access to change the nature of Charnwood Lodge. He believed that nature conservation was playing second fiddle to access and recreation in the minds of politicians and that the officers just jumped to their tune. Fortunately, there were some at local authority level who were prepared to be more pragmatic and a compromise was struck that has worked well so far.

Proud to consider himself an amateur and a volunteer, Mike fought hard to try and ensure that the importance of amateurs and volunteers were not lost in the fast changing world of the late twentieth century. Charities were successful at capturing funds that enabled them to employ professional staff, but while this brought some benefits it also threatened to reduce the involvement of volunteers as well as the charities' independence, because of the need to secure funding to pay salaries.

As well as being an expert on finance and computers (he could write his own programs, for example for the BSBI membership database), Mike could drive a tractor and operate a chainsaw. He was not too impressed

when the Trust insisted he go on a certificated course for the latter, however, to meet Health and Safety requirements. As he once said in his typically blunt and to the point way, 'I'm an awkward b****r'! He really enjoyed practical tasks and warmed particularly to other volunteers who were willing to give up their spare time to work on nature reserves. Sometimes he had a sharp word for those who did not.

Mike joined the BSBI as a member in 1960 and from 1971 to 1997 served as Honorary Treasurer and also a member of the Society's Council. During those years he kept a wise hand on the Society's organisation and finances and was described as 'the father figure to the Society and BSBI activities' (Briggs 2010). He was also Membership Secretary for many years and Chairman or a member of many committees, including BSBI Co-ordinating, later the Executive Committee, the Publications Committee, Chairman 1991–1997, the Committees for the Welch Bequest, the BSBI Taxonomic Database (Leicester), and the Warburg Fund. Mike was also BSBI Referee for Herbals and Local Floras of the British Isles. He gave a lecture on early local Floras at the BSBI Conference on Local Floras held in Liverpool in 1991 and was also elected an Honorary Member in the same year.

Books were a real passion of Mike's. He liked to describe himself as a natural history bibliophile, with a special interest in British Floras, and collected over a period of more

than 50 years. The story goes that he cycled to a nearby village to make his first purchase, but by his death he had amassed a library of an estimated 10,000 books, reputedly worth half a million pounds. They were housed in a purpose built extension to his house, which was lined with shelves, the books eventually three deep as the collection outgrew the available space.

Mike was often said to own the best private collection of botanical books in Britain, but he collected other books too, for example on his home county of Leicestershire. Lack of space eventually forced him to increasingly specialize in British Floras and he sold much of the rest of his collection.

Bloomsbury Auctions of Mayfair finally prepared the collection for sale after Mike's death producing a very useful catalogue. Mike had said that he intended to catalogue his collection himself after he retired, but in the event he was just as busy after retirement as before and he never found the time to do it. In the Bloomsbury catalogue, John Collins describes Mike as a 'bold, even reckless buyer....an essential ingredient in any serious collector'. This is very interesting, because when it came to the affairs of the Wildlife Trust, or the management of Charnwood Lodge Nature Reserve, Mike was quite the opposite of reckless. At one meeting the Trust's first Director informed the trustees that he was 'walking a tightrope' on a particular issue. Mike snorted that the trouble with walking tightropes was that you were likely to fall off! He was ultra cautious in almost anything remotely risky or experimental, the one exception being buying nature reserve land, which he thought was by far the most important function of a Wildlife Trust.

A few lucky ones were invited to take a look at his collection, but Mike only allowed one public viewing. That was way back in 1968, when 60 items were exhibited for six days at the Loughborough School of Librarianship. Amongst the items in his 'continental' botany collection was a first edition of Redouté's eight volume *Les Liliacées*, valued at between

£100,000–£150,000 and said to be 'among the most important monuments of botanical illustration ever to be published'. It is a pity that more people were not able to enjoy seeing treasures such as this, but perhaps the practicalities defeated Mike, who in the notes for his 1968 exhibition said that 'he hopes to spread appreciation of the delights of natural history illustration'.

Mike was the Honorary Treasurer to the committee that produced the *Flora of Leicestershire* (Primavesi & Evans 1988) and compiled the comprehensive bibliography it contains. His knowledge and enthusiasm for orchids was demonstrated in a detailed article on the orchids of his home county (Walpole 1968/9). In the 1960s he and two other local naturalists travelled long distances in their quest to seek out and photograph all of the British orchid species. Mike even once arranged a family holiday so that he could recruit the assistance of his children, with the incentive of a suitable reward, to locate the Lady's-slipper. The Isles of Scilly became a favourite destination and such was his liking for routine he was very disappointed one year when the hotel room on the islands that he and Ann had stayed in every year for nearly 30 years was unavailable.

Mike died in Leicester on 11 December 2009 after a long illness. His contribution to natural history and nature conservation was recognised in an invitation to a Queen's Garden Party and by an award for 'services to the community' by the retiring High Sheriff of Leicestershire. Ian Evans, former Assistant Director (Natural Sciences) with the Leicestershire Museums Service and Mike's friend of nearly 50 years, paid tribute to him saying that 'He was a man of his time, when a gifted, enthusiastic and energetic individual could make a huge contribution to natural history and nature conservation, without the need of any formal qualifications in those areas. We may not see his like again' (Evans 2010).

MICHAEL JEEVES

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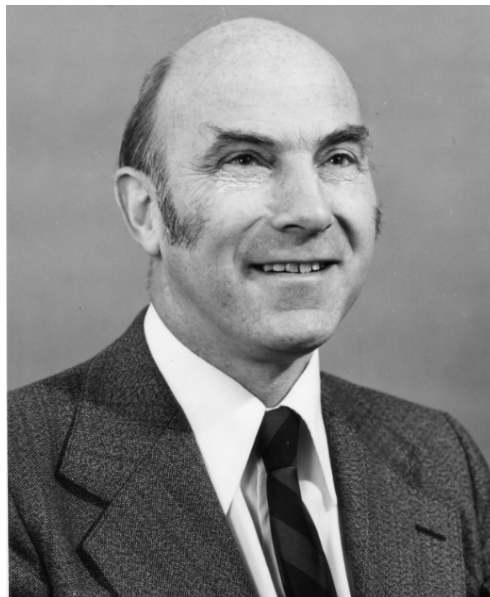
PETER SHAW GREEN
(1920–2009)

Peter Green was born on 11 September 1920 in Rochester, Kent, the youngest son of John and Elizabeth Green. Peter's father was an Engineer attached to the Royal Air Force and so the family moved around the United Kingdom as well as having one tour in Egypt whilst Peter was growing up. However, Peter had a fine and stable education at Taunton School for Boys, where besides his academic studies he joined the school's cadet corps, rising to Officer by the time he left school to enter University. With excellent academic results he entered King's College, London to study Botany. With the outbreak of the Second World War and with his cadet background he was soon called up and was quickly commissioned into the Northumberland Fusiliers as an Officer. Captain Peter Green was a crack shot and soon he was training new recruits how to accurately use their rifles on Salisbury Plain. As the war progressed he returned to his regiment where they were part of the Italian Campaign. After a serious bout of Typhoid he went on to serve in Greece. Whilst still in the Army in 1946 he married Winifred Brown with whom he had studied at King's College before the war. On demobilisation he returned to finish his degree at King's College and in 1948 he went on to take up the post of Assistant Lecturer at Birmingham University, where his lifelong friendship with Professor Jack Hawkes began. In 1951 Peter joined the staff of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh where his lifetime research interest in the Oleaceae was kindled and the first of the many scientific research papers on this family appeared. Always a team player and a gentle and instinctive tutor, the disturbing atmosphere of Edinburgh at that time led him to migrate with his family in 1960 to become the Horticultural Taxonomist at the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.

Peter's already wide taxonomic knowledge grew enormously at this time as he taught the students, curated the herbarium and identified a large and steady flow of cultivated material both live and herbarium material.

If this was not enough, he developed a major programme of fieldwork in the Western Pacific studying the genus *Jasminum*.

In 1966, Peter turned down the offer of tenure by Harvard University and instead returned to Britain to take up a post in the Australian Section of the RBG Kew under Dr Ronald Melville, whom he very soon



Peter Green, 1977. Photo reproduced with the kind permission of the Director and the Board of Trustees, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

afterwards succeeded to head up the section. In 1969, he was made Principal Scientific Officer, the career grade for a senior scientist at Kew at the time. As head of the Australian Section he had inherited a massive backlog of Australian and Pacific Islands herbarium material to identify, he set about the task with his team with great vigour and enthusiasm, whilst at the same time naming very large numbers of specimens arriving from the Solomon Islands' Forestry Department.

Peter's hard work, helpfulness and cheerfulness was recognised by all his colleagues around the world and so they all felt a particular pleasure when in 1969 he was promoted to Deputy Keeper of the Herbarium and Library, on the retirement of Edgar Milne-Redhead. With this post came the editorship of the *Kew Bulletin*, a task he thoroughly enjoyed, despite again inheriting a large backlog of manuscripts. His steady and helpful editing both cleared the backlog with the 'KB' returning to a more regular publishing programme. There was also a very positive spin-off as he helped to develop many Kew staff's skills in preparing papers for publication, although some found his meticulous attention to detail somewhat irritating.

During this time, his very wide knowledge gained whilst at The Arnold Arboretum, particularly as a consequence of his visits to Lord Howe Island, and also the research into the flora that he had carried out, stood him in good stead when as a world expert on this area he spoke out publicly. Peter never did shrink from speaking up for anything he felt strongly about and so it was in order to protect the endemic Fauna and Flora of Lord Howe Island that in 1970 he called for the eradication of all the introduced Goats, Pigs and Rats that were decimating this unique habitat. It caused irritation in some quarters but it showed the beginning of what was to be the start of Peter's long and positive support for plant conservation, later to be developed so strongly at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

With Pat Brenan as Keeper and Peter, his deputy, the whole restructuring of the way the Herbarium was organised was undertaken. These two quiet and confident men reorganised the staff, under newly founded Assistant Keeper posts to form Taxonomic units moving away from the regional structures of the past. It was a smooth transition that soon resulted in a more efficient and more productive out-put than ever before, both improving the naming services for the wider botanical community and in the delivery of more quality scientific papers from the staff.

The sudden resignation of the Director, Professor Jack Heslop-Harrison in 1975 caused a series of rapid changes in the senior management of Kew, Pat Brenan becoming Director and Peter becoming Keeper of the Herbarium and Library as well as Deputy Director, both posts that he held until he retired in 1982 on reaching compulsory retirement age under the rules of the Civil Service of the day. Although these last few years were mainly taken up by administrative tasks Peter never lost the opportunity, often in the evening to spend time on his 'pets' the Oleaceae and *Jasminum* in particular. A very perceptive comment in the Middlesex Chronicle in December 1982 suggested that 'Peter Green retires to start work'. How familiar that phrase is in the world of Taxonomy and how true in Peter's case.

As an Honorary Research Fellow of RBG, Kew, Peter, like many colleagues before and since, came into the herbarium most days and this allowed him to write taxonomic accounts of the Oleaceae for the *Flora of China and Thailand* as well as the majority of the text for

the *Flora of Australia*, Volume 49, that dealt with the complete flora of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands. Another very special illustrated work, published in 1996 brought together the very best skills of Peter's writing and Mary Grierson's Botanical Artistry in a volume called *A Hawaiian Florilegium, Botanical Portraits from Paradise*, published by the National Tropical Botanic Garden. This work appeared after a long delay and after many persuasive letters sent by Peter to ensure Mary's, let alone all his hard work, saw the light of day. These major works were supplemented by a substantial number of other Oleaceae and Jasmine papers that were gathered together to be presented for the award of D.Sc. that was presented by Kings College in 1997, to the pleasure of Peter's many friends and colleagues. A final and so appropriate a volume was published in 2009, written by Peter in collaboration with Diana Miller entitled *The Genus Jasminum in Cultivation*, thus bringing together both of his botanical loves, cultivated plants and his favourite genus *Jasminum*. What a fitting summation for a very fine gentleman and botanist.

To this point, this review is of Peter Green's professional life but, like so many biologists, he was generous of his 'free' time with many other organisations and causes. At Kew, he was a Vice President of the Kew Guild from 1977, becoming its President 1982–1983.

His involvement with the BSBI covers 69 years, having joined in 1945. During this time, he served on the Publications Committee for many years becoming Secretary from 1968 to 1973. He was also general referee for garden plants from 1995 to 2000, replying to the many queries from members with patience, good humour and authority. Peter attended BSBI Exhibition Meetings and Conferences with regularity, also assisting with their organisation when they were held at RBG, Kew. Peter brought all his skills and interests to bear when he edited the proceedings of the Conference on Horticulture and Field Botany, the joint meeting with the BSBI and RHS, held in September 1972. His constant support for BSBI activities made him many friends throughout the Society and he is certainly going to be missed by them all.

I would like to thank Dr I. K. Ferguson and Professor S. Owens and Mary Briggs for all the help they have provided in drawing this information together.

GREN LUCAS

PETER FREDERICK YEO
(1929–2010)

Peter Yeo was born at Kingston-upon-Thames on 30 March 1929. After schooldays at Clayesmore School he went up to Queens' College, Cambridge in 1948 to read the Natural Sciences Tripos, taking Part II Botany in 1951. He went on to postgraduate work for his PhD with Professor T. G. Tutin at Leicester, in the then-fashionable field of 'experimental taxonomy' working on the British species of *Euphrasia*. In 1953, he was appointed Taxonomist and Librarian at Cambridge University Botanic Garden, a post he held until his retirement in 1993.

Peter was a close contemporary of mine. I too came up to Queens' in 1948, and we were fellow-members of the Part II Botany class in 1950/1951, along with Franklyn Perring and Richard West amongst others. Peter's years at Clayesmore, in the diverse and beautiful Dorset countryside between Blandford and Shaftesbury, cannot have been without influence on his interest in natural history. As an undergraduate, he had a good knowledge of birds as well as flowering plants and insects; I saw my first Bewick's swan in his company at Cambridge sewage works and other species on the Staines reservoirs. Our shared interests led to many joint forays into the country around Cambridge plant-hunting and collecting Hymenoptera, especially the early species of *Andrena* and *Halictus*. That led on to collecting bees and wasps farther afield, on the Surrey commons (then much more extensive than now) and elsewhere. Peter was always careful to avoid the stings of the bees and wasps he collected; I was less cautious, and learnt at first hand about the ready and momentarily-painful stings of the spider-hunting pompilid wasps. (If you hunt such well-armed prey as spiders, it pays to use quick knock-down ammunition, and shoot first!) But Peter's carefulness and forethought stood him in good stead in his research work later. He was a quiet and rather reserved and serious person, but with a lighter side too of which perhaps only those who knew him well were aware.

Peter joined the B.S.B.I. in 1951, and he was a Fellow of the Linnean Society for 34 years. He does not seem to have been much involved in the organisation of the B.S.B.I., but he was on the Publications Committee from 1978–1987, and was known to many members as

Referee for *Euphrasia*, *Geranium* and *Aster*, and through his books. His PhD work led to a number of papers in *Watsonia* in the 1950s and 1960s. He later expanded his interest in *Euphrasia* to other geographic regions, first in a joint paper with Peter Sell (1970) on the North American species, then an account of the European species for *Flora Europaea* (1972; he was also author of *Geranium*, *Acaena* and *Ruscus* in later volumes), descriptions of the Turkish species of *Euphrasia* for the *Flora of Turkey* (1978), and finally a monograph of the European species (1978). He was awarded a Leicester DSc in 1974, to which his *Flora Europaea* (and other) work on *Euphrasia* and his joint authorship of the 'New Naturalist' *Pollination of Flowers* will have contributed.

Peter's job at the Cambridge Botanic Garden was ideally suited to his careful and systematic nature, and capacity for patient and persistent work. It was not a place for gathering citation statistics in the competitive publish-or-perish world of modern academia. Peter published an amply respectable amount of solid taxonomic work in his years at the 'BG', as well as his splendid book *Hardy Geraniums* (1985), revised for a second edition in 2001; his continuing interest in Hymenoptera led to a 'Naturalists' Handbook on Solitary wasps with Sally Corbet in 1983 (2nd revised edition, 1995). His scientific publications span half a century between 1954 and 2004. His major contribution was his work on the Garden's herbarium and library, and in ensuring that the plants in the Garden itself were accurately named, and in this work he was ably supported by his long-time assistant the late Clive King. He was one of those of whom it could be said *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice* [if you seek his monument – look around] but, outside the world of botanical gardens and plant taxonomy, those who could truly appreciate and value what Peter did over his 40 years tenure were all too few. He was on the Editorial Committee of the *European Garden Flora*, to which he contributed accounts of *Geranium* and *Aster*.

Some time around 1960, John Gilmour suggested that Peter and I might write a book for the 'New Naturalist' series on pollination. We agreed, and it soon became apparent that if we wanted photographs of insects visiting flowers we should have to take them ourselves.

That turned out to be part of my contribution to the book. We shared the text and drawings, Peter writing the chapters that leaned most heavily on the literature. His attention to detail and patience made him an ideal collaborator. If I had got something wrong, he would say so, in a reasoned and unprovocative way. His accounts of the mouth parts of the flower-visiting insects are scholarly and nicely accessible digests of some otherwise (for most people) esoteric entomological literature. Several books on pollination came out while we were working on ours, but as each appeared (Mary Percival, Faegri & Van der Pijl) we were able to breathe a sigh of relief: 'They haven't written *our* book.' There were interesting delays in production, one of which involved waiting for surface-mail from Tokyo, and led me to ask Michael Walter, then 'New Naturalist' editor, 'What is this; the Channel Tunnel?' (Now that we actually *have* a Channel Tunnel the force of that question in the 1970s is lost!). The book was well received, and led to Peter acquiring one of his few research students, Andrew Lack, who gained his PhD for a study of pollinator-relationships in chalk grassland (especially of the two native *Centaurea* species) on the Devil's Dyke near Newmarket.

In the 1990s we embarked on an update of the pollination book. We roped in a third author – Andrew Lack – who wrote roughly a

third of the new book and suggested the new title. Peter's chapters on the pollinating insects acquired a 1990s twist (at the suggestion of Isobel Smales), with the insect mouth-parts in a series of 'boxes' nicely setting them apart from the body of the text. For Peter and me the new book highlighted how much had changed over 20 years, not only in pollination biology, but also in printing and book production. Looking back, those years of working with Peter were both a privilege and a pleasure.

On his retirement he and his wife Elizabeth moved to an idyllic stone-built village in rural Northamptonshire, but they soon moved back to Grantchester Meadows, prompted partly by Peter's continuing botanical involvement in Cambridge (a measure of his dedication and the esteem in which he was held by his peers), and partly by declining health.

We are all part of the great river of life, upon which it is given to few to make waves. All the institutions we value need talented but unobtrusive people like Peter to keep the wheels turning smoothly and productively. We should not underrate them or take them for granted. Peter's contribution, spanning half a century, was substantial and important. It is sad that Parkinson's disease should have overshadowed so much of his retirement.

MICHAEL PROCTOR

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(compiled by M.C.F. Proctor and C.D. Preston)

P.F.Y. is the sole author of all papers unless stated.

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In addition, P.F.Y. reviewed books for various journals, including *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society*, *British Book News*, *Gardeners' Chronicle*, *Journal of Ecology*, *New Phytologist*, *Science Progress*, *The Garden* and *Watsonia*.