

Obituary

BEVERLEY ALAN MILES

(1937-1970)

Beverley Alan Miles died suddenly in his sleep on 26th January, 1970 at the early age of 32. He will be sadly missed by many friends, and especially those interested in *Rubi*.

He was born at Porthcawl in Glamorgan on 17th November, 1937 and educated at Bridgend Elementary School and Bridgend Grammar School for Boys. He was awarded a State Scholarship and went up to St John's College, Cambridge in October 1956, receiving first class Honours in Part I of the Natural Sciences Tripos in 1958. In 1958-59 he took the course for Part II of the Natural Sciences Tripos in Psychology, without however sitting the examination. He also took a course in Danish, passing the Oral examination. Miles received his B.A. in 1959 and his M.A. in 1963.

In October 1959 Miles took up the position of Biology Master at St Mary's Grammar School for Boys at Sidcup, being in charge of that subject until his resignation in December 1969. He was respected by masters and pupils alike for his scholarship, and his capacity for informal discussion and keen sense of humour were much appreciated. Although he suffered from a painful form of bronchial trouble, especially during the winter months, which often made teaching laborious and difficult, he rarely complained and was always cheerful. The respect of his senior pupils was shown by the large number of sixth-formers present at his funeral.

Miles was appointed Curator of the South London Botanical Institute on May 30th, 1969, but did not take up residence until a month before his death. It was his intention to spend his whole time on botanical research.

His interest in plants started at the very early age of 7 or 8 years, when he went on country walks with his parents and collected flowers to take home and press in a book. By the time he had reached the age of 14 he had built up a collection of botanical books, and all his spare time and holidays were spent collecting plants, his parents taking him to many parts of the British Isles. My first acquaintance with him was when I received, on the 10th August 1954, a letter asking me if I would check the identification of 20 specimens of *Hieracium*. To my surprise 18 of the 20 specimens were correctly named, and (what I did not know at the time) by a self-taught 17-year-old. On his arrival at Cambridge in 1956 he paid many visits to the Herbarium, and towards the end of his stay approached me for a suggestion as to a critical genus on which to work. I suggested *Taraxacum* or *Rubus*, and after one summer's work on *Taraxacum* he finally turned to *Rubus*, and chose as his College Prize W. C. R. Watson's *Rubi of Great Britain and Ireland*. We drew up together a programme on which he could work, based on the similar problems and experiences I had had with *Hieracium*. It was particularly unfortunate, in view of his early death, that I impressed upon him the necessity of working for about 10 years before he made any major publication. He was preparing his first papers at the time of his death.

Miles' main contribution to the study of British plants lies in the work he had done on *Rubus* in the Cambridge Herbarium (CGE). From his days at Cambridge onwards he was allowed completely free access to the *Rubus* herbarium and, when he moved to Sidcup, was given permission to take as much material as he liked to his home for study. The *Rubus* collection at Cambridge now consists of 21,795 sheets and contains the original herbaria of J. Lindley, C. C. Babington, E. S. Marshall, W. H. Mills and J. E. Woodhead, as well as a large proportion of that of W. C. R. Watson, and many sheets of W. A. Leighton, T. B. Salter, F. A. Lees, E.F. and W. R. Linton, W. M. Rogers and W. C. Barton. During the 10 years Miles worked on *Rubus* he examined and annotated the major part of this material. The Watson herbarium in 1959 was unmounted and labelled only with copious abbreviated notes scribbled on the margins of newspapers. One of Miles' first tasks was to mount this material himself and

decipher the labels. The Babington Collection of *Rubi* was sent on permanent loan to the British Museum in 1934, but was never incorporated into their collection. In view of Miles' work on the Cambridge collection, permission was obtained to return the Babington collection. Miles personally carried out this transference, collecting it from the British Museum, annotating it and returning it in sections to Cambridge. While annotating the Cambridge herbarium he selected many lectotypes, a task not attempted by Watson in his revision of the British *Rubi*.

His nearness to the large London herbaria and libraries allowed him to check on other types and also to examine the prolific literature on the subject. He worked meticulously through all the British literature, extracting every name ever used in *Rubus*, and made attempts to check the original place of publication. In the course of his checking of the literature and the selection of types he found many earlier combinations not in the present checklist of British *Rubi*, and realised that many name changes had to take place. The only one of these published was the typification of *Rubus echinatus* Lindley and its synonymy (*Watsonia*, 6: 295 (1957)). Fortunately the remainder of this work is set out in his manuscripts. He also examined specimens in other herbaria and for private individuals, records of these specimens being found in his notebooks.

As well as working in the herbarium he travelled with his close friend, Roy Jones, to many parts of the British Isles, building up a large collection of his own, and in particular making gatherings from many type localities. His herbarium contains 4,560 sheets of *Rubus*, beautifully pressed, copiously annotated and mounted to the best advantage. After an excursion to the Cornish peninsula he added his opinion to that of the late W. H. Mills in thinking that Watson was wrong in not recognising as distinct the many species described by F. Rilstone from that area.

His interest in *Rubus* was not confined to the British species. He had looked at *Rubus* from many parts of the world and, just before his death, had started work on the account of *Rubus* for the *Flora of Turkey*. R. L. Amor, working on *Rubus* in Australia, sent Miles several boxes of specimens of European brambles introduced into Australia. These Miles had named, and there is a nearly complete manuscript giving an account of them, which it is hoped can be published in the near future in conjunction with Amor.

Miles' early interest in *Hieracium*, particularly the Section *Alpina*, was continued throughout his life. From 1965 onwards he spent several weeks each summer camping in the Scottish mountains so that he could make a particular study of this Section. His herbarium contains 778 specimens of *Hieracium*, including some very fine samples of *Alpina* and representing most described British species of the genus.

His herbarium, consisting of 7068 sheets in all, contains an excellent series of *Sorbus* and many sheets from his native county, Glamorgan. Miles left no will. He always gave his friends to understand that he wished his herbarium to go to Cambridge, but on accepting the Curatorship of the South London Botanical Institute had announced his intention of adding his collection to theirs. The Council of the Institute, however, decided they would be happy for his herbarium and manuscripts to go to Cambridge, in accordance with the wishes of his father.

P. D. SELL

I should like to pay tribute to the friendliness and generosity of Beverley Miles. I spent a few days at his house three years ago and he gave me free access to his herbarium and was extremely helpful and kind. He lived at the heart of W. C. R. Watson's countryside and was in a good position to study Watson's species as living bushes. The greatest value of Miles' herbarium is that it contains reliable specimens of nearly all the brambles recognised by Watson. If the student armed with Watson's Handbook wants to know what Watson meant by a name, he can usually find the answer in Miles' herbarium. The next step is to test Watson's identifications and correct them where they are wrong. Miles had only just begun to do this and there is a long way to go.

E. S. EDEES