

JAMES CULLEN (1936–2013)

James Cullen, who has died aged 77, was a native of Liverpool and a graduate of the University in Botany with First Class honours. After completing his doctorate, he moved to the University of Edinburgh as Peter H. Davis's first editorial assistant on the *Flora of Turkey* project, launched with funding from the Science Research Council and based at Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden. For the next five years he not only assisted Dr Davis in developing the format for the *Flora*, but also contributed many taxonomic accounts for the first four volumes, as well as editing those written by other botanists. He also wrote, with Dr Davis, a key to flowering plant families, which proved most valuable for generations of students.

In 1968, James joined the staff of Liverpool University, when he was appointed Deputy Director of Ness Botanic Gardens under Ken Hulme, where he contributed greatly to enhancing the collections both of living material in the Gardens and of scientific voucher specimens of cultivated plants. These latter were housed in the University's herbarium in what is now the Bulley Room, formerly Mr Bulley's billiard room. He also participated in an active programme of taxonomic work by staff and postgraduate students of the Department of Botany, many of whom made good use of the facilities of the Garden for growing experimental material.

James's next appointment was to become Assistant Keeper (effectively Deputy Director) of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. His duties embraced not only deputising for the Director, a task that included taking Princess Margaret on a guided tour of the gardens at very short notice (a task he would have performed with his usual diplomacy and tact) but also developing the scientific programme of the garden and making key appointments to its staff. He also developed his own research into the taxonomy of the genus *Rhododendron*, then widely acknowledged to be in something of a mess, and this

resulted in a series of publications in the garden's journal presenting a new classification, which was welcomed by both horticulturists and botanists alike. He also took the opportunity to re-plan the *Rhododendron* plantings in the Garden, and was one of the first to adopt computer technology in the late 1970s to document the garden's living collections electronically. By pioneering the computerisation of the Garden's inventory he helped set standards for horticultural collections that were adopted worldwide.

In 1979 a visiting group appointed to scrutinise the work of the R.B.G. included Dr Max Walters, the then Director of Cambridge University's botanic garden, and it became apparent that both Max and James saw the need for a garden flora to enable botanists and horticulturists to identify cultivated plants to species level using a single source of reference. The project they launched with the help of funds from the Stanley Smith UK Horticultural Trust became known as the *European garden flora*. Six volumes were published between 1984 and 2000 by Cambridge University Press. A second edition appeared in 2011. James not only co-edited the work but also wrote many of the accounts and met the challenge of obtaining the funding to ensure its completion.

Following the death of the former Director of Kew Gardens, Sir George Taylor, who in his retirement had headed the Stanley Smith Trust, James decided to leave Edinburgh and take on the Trust's Directorship with the job of awarding grants in support of horticultural initiatives. Supported by a board of expert trustees, James discreetly promoted a large number of schemes and assisted individuals in their projects. At this point he had moved to Cambridge, where he and his family lived just a short walk from his office in Cory Lodge at the University's Botanic Garden. James's achievements were recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society with the award of the prestigious Veitch Memorial Medal for his

“outstanding contribution to the advancement and improvement of the science and practice of horticulture”.

We will remember James most of all for his modesty, his wide knowledge of botany,

editorial expertise, managerial tact and effectiveness, and his love of poppies, music and much else.

JOHN EDMONDSON