

## CHARLES DAVID

(1948–2012)

Charles was born on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1948 and lived in St Peter Port in Guernsey in a house with a view overlooking the harbour and the other islands. As a young boy, he went on his bike exploring the island. His father's cousin, Richard Le Pelley, was a keen naturalist and showed him many places and taught him much about the natural world. It was during these years that Charles got to know the island in great depth and detail. There seemed to be no place he did not know of and had not been to at some time. He belonged to La Société Guernesiaise as a child and started collecting insects and other wildlife at a young age. Whilst at Elizabeth College, he was fortunate enough to be taught Biology by Nigel Jee, a keen botanist and member of the BSBI. He kept up with Nigel throughout his life and had a great affection for his former teacher. He left to go to University at Reading, where he studied Zoology, passing out with a First Class Honours degree. He then went to Imperial College to study for a PhD. in insect behaviour, specifically: 'Scent and light orientation by foraging *Myrmica scabrinodis* Nyl. (Hymenoptera: Formicidae)'. He then worked at the research station at Silwood Park in Berkshire.

He got a post in California studying carpenter ant behaviour in the Coastal Redwood forests, and was there for some three years before returning to Silwood to take up another postdoctorate post. He picked up programming skills along the way during his research. He did research on various areas of insect physiology, including flies' eyes, insect flight, and moth pheromones, as part of the insect physiology group. Eventually, once he and his wife, Catie, had a child, Richard, they decided to come to Guernsey in 1987. They were to have another boy, Thomas, within a couple of years.

Charles got a job here as a manager of Dynatech Medical Products Ltd., which made equipment for medical procedures. He both

ran the accounts department and managed their computer operations, including writing software and systems analysis. He moved to Ozannes in 1997, as Dynatech was taken over by an American firm and wound up here. He again ran the accounts department and was the computer systems manager. He was to leave there and in 2005 started working for Digimap, again doing accounts/ bookkeeping, but also a range of programming.

As soon as he arrived back in Guernsey, he went along to La Société Guernesiaise meetings, first Entomology and then Nature Conservation and Botany. He was a keen and regular attendee of meetings and took on the mantle of running the Marine Biology section for a few years. He was a keen naturalist first and foremost and always out looking for, recording and collecting insects and other invertebrates for identification. He also looked at a wide range of plants and the variety of creatures of the seashore, but it was his knowledge of insects, other than moths, that marked him as an exceptional contributor to the island's records. No one else since Luff had collected such a wide range of insects. Charles left the moths to others (as there are several keen Lepidopterists on the island), but each year seemed to focus on a particular group, especially when a good new key appeared in print that enabled him to identify them more successfully. He was also keen on botany and maintained a wide interest in the natural world. He was a good companion for walks, with his prodigious knowledge of Guernsey. These could sometimes be scary, especially on the cliffs, as he appeared to have no fear of heights or of the lethal sheer cliff edges close by. He could be discussing the last known sighting of a Stoat or taking one to where he last saw Greater Horseshoe Bats or rare ants, whilst suddenly commenting on an unusual fly that had caught his attention. He went everywhere in sandals and socks, even the wettest or most vertiginous place, and

wore his Guernsey for much of the year – a good form of protection from local weather indeed! Meanwhile, he became more and more vital to La Société, becoming editor for a time in the mid 1990s, before becoming vice-president to David Le Conte in 2004 and president in 2006. He was later to become Entomology Section secretary and ran the Scientific Committee from when it was formed in the mid 2000s until his death. He would review all planning applications that might have a bearing on an important piece of land, liaise with the committee and write an appropriate response. This was vital work in the conservation of the island and his willingness to take the time and effort to do this was such a boon. He also took guided walks round the Orchid fields and others as the need arose (see Colour Section, Plate 1). He could turn his hand to designing posters and reserve signs – he had a natural artistic flair for producing an attractive product.

In the early 1990s, he wrote a programme, Distmaps, for keeping his records, using a map as a basis. He made records wherever he went, whether locally, in the other islands or France. Once the company, Digimap, had developed Bailiwick (later to be Channel Island) mapping software, he modified his recording computer software to fit onto their programme maps. It was appropriate therefore, that he should work for Digimap later on.

In 2003, the Guernsey Biological Records Centre was set up, using his software. He ran the centre with Bridget Ozanne. Whilst she worked on entering many botanical records, he continued to enter animal data and modify the programme as they thought up improvements. He reviewed the SNCIs (the local equivalent of SSSIs in the UK, although they do not have the same legal protection) along with Bridget Ozanne and me (as Botany and Nature Conservation Section secretaries respectively). He organised the setting up of the Ramsar site in Guernsey and advised Alderney and Sark on theirs. He provided identifications for many members of the public as well as advising the Environment Department. He produced useful booklets, such as a *Field key to the commonest and most*

*conspicuous species of Guernsey mosses and liverworts* to help others to gain an appreciation of these non-flowering plants. When Bridget died in 2007, he took on the mantle of running the GBRC and became the Botanical Society of the British Isles recorder, in addition to sending in records for many insect recording schemes in the UK. He set about becoming even more proficient at plant identification, concentrating on areas such as sedges, lichens, mosses and liverworts that he felt he needed to improve on. He wrote a programme for pocket PCs, using GPS technology to enable plant and animals to be recorded to within five metres (provided the machine had located at least five satellites!). These could then be downloaded onto a computer and imported into Distmaps. He ran the GBRC from 2007 until his death on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2012. He also did survey work and environmental impact assessments in the various islands, working for Environment Guernsey. He co-ordinated the habitat survey of Guernsey for the Environment Department. This survey, coming ten years after the first one, did so much to highlight the loss of certain key habitats, such as unimproved grassland.

Busy until the end on projects covering many natural history areas and in all the Channel Islands, he was working on the setting up of a records centre in Jersey, co-ordinating the Jersey habitat survey, advising Sark on setting up recording/monitoring programmes there, advising Alderney regularly and surveying for them. He encouraged Jersey botanists to have Pocket PCs and went out with them to help with identification as well as carrying out his own recording there, so rapidly building up records. The computer maps of all the islands have records showing where Charles had taken walks; these were often circular routes round lanes and cliff paths.

JANE GILMOUR



Charles David at Ozanne Orchid Fields, Guernsey, 2005.  
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