

OBITUARIES

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BENGT EDVARD JONSELL (1936–2023)

Bengt Jonzell was born in Göteborg, Sweden, on 11 June 1936. His father was a medical radiologist, his mother a housewife, and he had two brothers and a sister. The family moved to Nyköping where Bengt went to school, and where he became interested in birds and plants. He then studied at Uppsala University, and did his doctoral thesis on the European species of *Rorippa*. This resulted in his masterly paper 'Studies in the north-west European species of *Rorippa* s.str.' published in *Symbolae Botanicae Upsaliensis* 19: 1–222 (1968), which had perhaps his greatest influence on British taxonomy. Among much else, it established the existence of the two species *R. palustris* and *R. islandica* in Britain, as well as in other parts of Europe. Continuing with *Rorippa*, he gave a paper on hybridisation in the genus to a BSBI conference at Cambridge in 1974, later published in the conference proceedings. Becoming Docent in 1968 at Uppsala, Bengt became Lecturer in 1977 and then Chair of Ecological Botany at Uppsala until 1999. He was also attached to Stockholm University from 1977 to 1983, and from 1983 to 2001 he was Bergius Professor and directed the Bergius Botanic Garden in Stockholm.

In 1987 Bengt took the great step of founding *Flora Nordica*, with Thomas Karlsson as co-editor. This was to cover Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, the Faeroes and the Norwegian Arctic islands, with a total of some 4,600 species. Fourteen volumes, in English, were planned. Vol. 1 appeared in 2000, Vol. 2 in 2001, a general introductory volume in 2004 and Vol. 6 in 2010. But the funding, which had been provided by the Swedish Museum of Natural History and the Bergius Foundation, ran out and, in the deplorable absence of any further funding, the project had to



Bengt Jonzell, 1986. Clive Stace

be abandoned and one of the most authoritative and useful of European floras was never completed. Bengt had planned to write a number of genera in the Brassicaceae for Vol. 3, and did manage to publish a few of the accounts separately. In 2001, along with his distinguished botanist wife Lena, he published a revision of the Krok/Almquist *Svensk Flora*.

In 1972 Bengt became Regional Adviser for Sweden for *Flora Europaea*, replacing Nils Hylander,

and this resulted in him making closer contacts with members of the Editorial Committee (all English). Soon after, he replaced Eric Hultén as Regional Collaborator for Sweden on the Committee for Mapping the Flora of Europe. Long active in the Svenska Linnésällskapet, of which he was President in 1986–1998, he was elected an Honorary Foreign Member of the Linnean Society of London in 1995. He became President of the International Organisation of Plant Biosystematists, attending several of their international meetings and being one of the chief organisers of the 1995 conference in Tromsø. All these positions and responsibilities led to many visits to Britain and to friendships with many British botanists. He was one of the most friendly, co-operative and convivial of botanists. Amongst his many activities with British botanists I, for example, took him on a botanical tour of sites in the north of England and North Wales in 1974 in return for a tour of the Scandinavian Arctic, as well as areas round Uppsala, in 1973 when we saw most of the Scandinavian species of *Carex*, vital for my account of the genus in *Flora Europaea*. In 1998 he paid a particularly productive visit to the English sites for *Viola rupestris* with Jeremy Roberts, resulting in their paper, with Inger Nordal, ‘*Viola rupestris* and its hybrids in Britain’, *Watsonia* 21: 269–278 (2000). When he took part in the BSBI

field meeting at Glynhir in Carmarthenshire in 2008 it was a pleasure to take him to some of the sites for *Rorippa islandica*, and he was impressed by the vast numbers of the plants of this species at one of them. He had joined the BSBI in 1983, and in 1998 he was made an Honorary Member; Franklyn Perring wrote a delightful profile of him in *BSBI News* 79: 7–8 (1998). One of the results of his involvement with British botany is his paper ‘250 years of Nordic-British meeting points in botany’, read at the Linnean Society and published in *BSBI News* 85: 67–77 (2000). He and Lena attended the BSBI conference at Leicester on ‘Current taxonomic research work on the European flora’ in 2003.

Bengt, who died on 4 February 2023, had always lived in Uppsala, but he was one of those taxonomists who strongly believed that their kind should make an effort to see many of the world’s floras and had himself travelled extensively. He and Lena had four sons, Mats, Svante, Björn and Ulf. All those of us in the BSBI who knew him will have fond memories and give Lena (who kindly provided some details of Bengt’s early life) and the family our warmest appreciation and sympathy.

My thanks to Clive Stace for the photo and for helpful additions to this obituary.

Arthur Chater