

OBITUARIES

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TREVOR GEORGE EVANS (1924–2023)

Trevor Evans died on 11 January 2023 at the age of 98. He was the pre-eminent Monmouthshire botanist for half a century.

Trevor was born on 7 April 1924 in Portskewett, the only child of school caretakers George Evans and Dorothy Hewlett. He had osteomyelitis as a child and told tales of the painful operations before modern anaesthetics, coming round every so often before being given another dose of ether on a cottonwool pad. The osteomyelitis left him with a limp but did nothing to detract from his determination to lead a full life. The family moved into Chepstow when he was young and he lived there all his life.

Trevor was educated in Chepstow schools and then read biology as his main subject at Caerleon Teacher Training College. He taught in Chepstow, as a supply teacher, as acting headmaster and as a science teacher at St Kingsmark Secondary Modern School, later merging with Larkfield Grammar School to become Chepstow Comprehensive School. He retired in 1984, allowing him more time to devote to botany.

Trevor married his childhood sweetheart Ursula Thelma Jones in 1946. They had two sons, Nigel and Nicholas, and consequently grandchildren of which he was justly proud. Later in life, Nigel and Nicholas were surprised to find that other families didn't go into the woods to watch badgers. Thelma was his life-long friend and companion, sharing his love of wildflowers and accompanying him on many days in the field. Her loss to cancer in 1999 hit him hard.

Trevor's enthusiasm for wild flowers was sparked as a boy whilst watching cricket, one of his other passions. He and his friends used to collect cigarette cards that spectators dropped under the stands; one



Trevor Evans. Nigel Evans

set of cards was of wild flowers and the rest, as they say, is history. His botany was self-taught and he became actively involved with recording for the first *Atlas of the British Flora* in the 1950s. When Arthur Wade retired as Vice-county Recorder in 1972, Trevor was the obvious choice to replace him. All Trevor inherited in the way of records was what was published in Wade's 1970 *Flora of Monmouthshire* so he began compiling data, and in 1985 formally started recording for a new Flora with local botanists. In 1998 at the age of 74 he bought a computer to write the Flora, and largely taught himself to use it (with much late-night technical support on the phone from family and friends!). After a great deal of careful field work, the introduction was written in 2000 but he ran into data problems resulting from conversion of his records between three different databases. After three frustrating years, this was resolved with a bit of help and then he spent the two following years writing the species accounts, despite very painful knees and some arthritis. His definitive *Flora of Monmouthshire* was published in 2007 to great

acclaim; it will be the standard reference work for many years to come. He was awarded the President's prize from the BSBI/Wild Flower Society for the Flora. He served on the BSBI Committee for Wales for many years, was elected an honorary member of the BSBI in 2010 and retired as V.-c. Recorder in 2012. His herbarium of carefully pressed and labelled voucher specimens is held at the National Museum of Wales (NMW) and is another invaluable resource.

In addition to the Flora, Trevor also provided thousands of plant records for the BSBI (Monitoring Scheme, *New Atlas*, etc.) and organisations such as the Countryside Council for Wales/Natural Resources Wales, local councils, the Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Ministry of Defence. He had seen huge changes in the countryside during over 60 years of searching for plants and was very critical of organisations that had inadvertently destroyed so much beloved good habitat. He also enjoyed botanising elsewhere in the hills of Britain and Europe, and watching butterflies and birds. His garden was full of plant treasures which were carefully mown around.

As well as being an excellent botanist, Trevor was also a talented artist. He contributed many excellent line drawings of plants to the BSBI Handbook *Crucifers* and to *BSBI News* (especially of alien plants, another of his passions), and to his Flora. Portraits

were another speciality and he was also very good at wood carving. He loved poetry which he and Thelma shared many hours reading together.

Trevor was a natural teacher and was able to explain the diverse field characters of many different plant groups with ease, and much of this knowledge is summarised in his Flora. He was always willing to share his knowledge and gave many talks to Gwent organisations over the years. He was a lovely, courteous man with an irrepressible and delightfully wicked sense of humour. Car trips to meetings involved much laughter – give him an inch and he'd tease you for miles!

Trevor was a member of the Gwent Wildlife Trust from 1970 and served as Chairman of the Trust's Conservation Committee for a number of years. He was also interested in local history and helped found the Chepstow Society in 1948, fulfilling terms as Chairman and President and writing a history of the Society. He also supported and was President of Monmouthshire Meadows Group from soon after it was founded in 2003. He was awarded an MBE for services to conservation and wildlife in Monmouthshire in 2012. Evans' whitebeam *Sorbus evansii* was named in his honour in 2014.

Elsa Wood, Stephanie Tyler and Tim Rich