

ANTHONY WARREN SMITH (1929–2018)

Tony Smith was born in Bedford on 22nd November 1929, the oldest of four children.

His mother kindled his interest in the natural world and she would have known flower names. He went to school in Bedford and left to join the railway, which he had loved since his first train journey at an early age. After National Service with the RAF he returned to the railway, and on completing his training he went to several little stations including Aspatria in Cumberland (as it was then), serving as Station Master in at least three different places. In 1956 he married Elizabeth Ann Houldey in Rugeley, Staffordshire, where Liz lived, and they had two children. Working in railway offices, timetables were his great love, an interest which continued later on Arran with input into the bus timetables. This tied in with his love of making lists, listing flowers, birds, everything, even lists of lists!

On retirement from Western Region after 35 years with the railway, he joined a nature society in Bath and Avon. The Avon Wildlife Trust were carrying out verge surveys at the time and they sent Tony out into the country to record roadside flowers, which appealed to his love of making lists. Liz accompanied him at first as she knew more about flowers at that time, but he soon took over. She recalls that Tony was always interested in all aspects of nature but he didn't really study flowers until he retired.

In 1986, not long after moving to Whiting Bay on the Isle of Arran, Tony went to Brodick Castle to meet head gardener Derek Warner, and there he was introduced to Tony Church, who was soon to become the local Vice-county Recorder. He lived in Lochranza at the opposite end of Arran, and the two Tonies between them set about systematically recording the island for the first time. Many botanists had visited Arran on holiday, but most had been content to record *Mertensia maritima* (Oysterplant) and the endemic *Sorbus* (whitebeam) species. The two co-authored a checklist of the flora at hectad scale in 1990, which has since been kept up to date by successive revisions. As a result of their labours, Arran was well represented in the *New Atlas* (2002). After this, Tony Church retired from the recordership, leaving Tony Smith in sole charge of Arran botany. He refused any formal post, and after

I took over as Clyde Islands recorder he continued to resist my efforts to have him appointed joint recorder.

Living on Bute, I had little opportunity to spend time on Arran, and most of the Arran fieldwork fell to Tony. His broad interest in natural history gained him many contacts around the island. Apart from plants, music was his great interest, and he was a gifted teacher. As well as piano, he coached four choirs to festival standard, which kept him very busy at certain times of the year. This further extended his range of acquaintances, and along with his invariably pleasant and courteous manner ensured that he was always welcome to botanise in places where others might have been less well received. The Forestry Commission even allowed him to plant his favourite tree (*Abies forrestii*) at several sites on their land.

Once I had persuaded him that all records were useful to BSBI (and not merely new hectad records), I would receive an annual bundle of 40–50 recording cards from the sites he had visited throughout the year. Tony never used a computer, but he kept meticulous lists from all his sites. These usually coincided with monads except where topography dictated otherwise (one favourite fragment of ravine woodland fell into four tetrads!), and covered nearly all of Arran except the mountains. Tony had a small number of regular botanising companions with whom he shared his ever-widening store of wisdom, notably Robin Whitlaw, Alan McBain and most recently Sarah Cowan, to whom now falls the task of carrying Arran botany forward. Sarah remembers that he had a sweet tooth, and would share around Twix bars at the end of each outing.

Tony's particular botanical interests included ferns (he led a number of meetings of the British Pteridological Society when they visited Arran), *Atriplex* (he was the first to demonstrate the presence of *longipes* hybrids in the Clyde area) and willows, as he wrestled with the multitude of hybrid forms which Arran presented. He paid close attention to sedges and grasses and took a particular interest in areas of clear-fell sitka spruce, observing the vegetational succession when these remained unplanted for many years, as often happened in Arran at that period. His enthusiasm for conifers led him to make a complete

inventory of all the kinds planted in Brodick Castle grounds. But he drew the line at coastal casuals, and would march deliberately past some odd-looking horticultural alien, saying he did not wish his lists to be mistaken for a nurseryman's catalogue. Despite this, his own garden was a glorious mixture of Arran plants, native or otherwise, where another of his enthusiasms, hybrid docks, had a prominent place.

During his 30 years of active botanising on Arran he contributed over 58,000 records to the BSBI database, the majority of these after Tony Church's retirement. But no less significant were the insights he passed on with inexhaustible patience to many (including myself). He would encapsulate the jizz of a plant in a few well-chosen words, and it would be remembered. He wrote a series of articles on trees for

the local paper, the *Arran Banner*, and he led botanical walks for the National Trust for Scotland, for schools and for local natural history groups.

Tony died 'of old age' on 10th September 2018 and is buried in Lamlash cemetery, a regular recording site where he and Alan found the pretty, pale blue flowers of *Pratia pedunculata* (the first record for v.c.100) in 2009. He is survived by his grown-up children, Alison and Aidan, both living in Arran, and his wife Liz, to whose care he devoted much time in his last years.

I thank Tony Smith's widow Liz, Tony Church and Sarah Cowan for contributions to this obituary.

Angus Hannah