

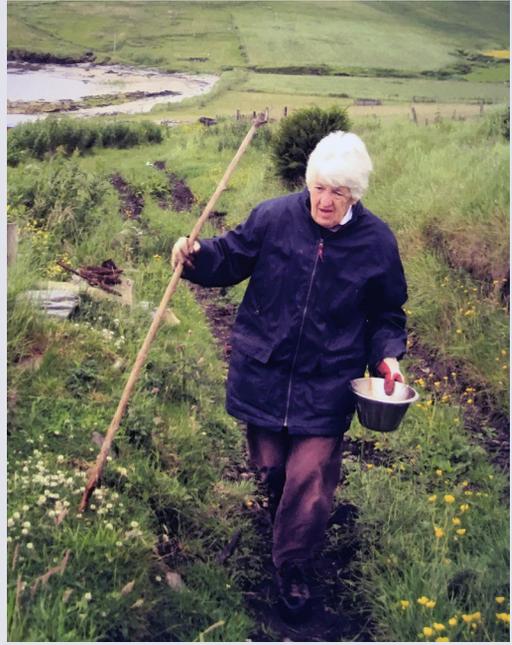
MARGARET DOROTHY PERRING (1933–2020)

For me, as for many other BSBI members of a certain age, memories of Exhibition Meetings and the like are coloured by the presence of Margaret Perring, perforce in the background, selling books, in, how shall we say it, relatively controlled temper and order! It was she and her husband Frank's father, also Frank, who started the whole venture, in 1976 (Perring, 1983). This initially sold just BSBI's own publications and county floras, but it gradually branched out into second-hand books on botany too. She carried on the business after Frank senior's death in 1982, and only passed it over to Jon and Sue Atkins of Summerfield Books in 2000.

Margaret Perring (née Barrow) was born in Maesteg on 14 May 1933 and was head girl at Maesteg Grammar School before going on to read Biology at Leeds University. Here she developed an interest in botany and after several years working as a schoolteacher in the UK she moved to Melbourne, and eventually ended up working as a botanist in Western Australia. She co-authored several research papers based on her work there, but these were only published after she returned to Britain in 1967 (see References).

She then worked for the Nature Conservancy at Monks Wood Experimental Station, in the Woodlands Section. In 1970 she moved to be an Assistant Regional Officer in South Wales, but in 1972 she married the well-known botanist, Franklyn Perring, and they lived in Oundle. Frank was the author, with Max Walters, of the *Atlas of the British Flora* (1962) and pioneered the now familiar distribution 'dot maps' of species in 10-kilometre squares. He had subsequently become the first Head of the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood, a post that he held from 1964 to 1978. Frank was also very interested in conservation and from 1979 to 1987 was General Secretary of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, the umbrella body that coordinates the Wildlife Trusts in their current form.

All this time Margaret continued with 'BSBI Publications' (or 'Oundle Books'). After Frank



Margaret Perring at Channerwick, Shetland, June 2018. *Emma Thomson*

retired he set up a company called Wildlife Travel, which offered expert-led wildlife holidays and donated its profits to the Wildlife Trusts. He and Margaret led many of the botanical trips including ones to Australia, where Margaret's knowledge and expertise came to the fore. Margaret had one daughter, Emma, who lived on Fair Isle, married Ewen Thomson, a Fair Isle luthier, and now works for the Shetland Islands Council. Frank died in 2003 and in 2007 Margaret decided to return to her original home in South Wales. She moved into a flat in Cardiff Bay, was much involved with the local Wildlife Trust, came to BSBI Exhibition Meetings in London and elsewhere, continued her great love of music (especially opera) and was still active until a few months before her death, from a stroke, on 5 April 2020.

I am very grateful to Margaret's daughter, Emma, for help in compiling this obituary.

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