

Anthony Clive Jermy (1932-2014)

Clive Jermy, who died on 25th July 2014, was one of the great catalysts in the field of botany, and his contributions were remarkably varied and lasting. His range of colleagues and correspondents was phenomenal. By profession primarily a pteridologist, he was also the leading *Carex* expert in the country, he initiated BSBI Handbooks, he was a prime mover in both local British and international conservation organisations, he was a tireless leader of training courses, and was a much-valued expert at organising expeditions to the tropics.

Clive was born in Strumpshaw, near Norwich, and attended Norwich Grammar School. He was interested in plants from an early age and benefited from the friendship of such local experts as Joyce Lambert, the ecologist of the Norfolk Broads, and Ted Ellis, the great all-round naturalist. He got his degree at University College, London, and then moved to Leicester to do a PhD on *Carex* section *Acutae* (now *Phacocystis*) under T.G. Tutin. This was interrupted by National Service, which he spent as a teacher in Kent, and then in 1958, instead of returning to Leicester, he got the job of Head of the Fern Section at the British Museum (Natural History), remaining there for the rest of his career, respected and liked by his staff for his sympathetic management. In 1990 the re-organisation at the Museum resulted in Clive becoming Head of Collections in the Botany Department until his retirement in 1992. He was the initiator and main organiser of the Museum's Wildlife Garden in the grounds.

Clive joined the BSBI in 1950 and was variously on the Conservation Committee, the Publications Committee and the Council, as well as being a Vice-president. He was made an Honorary Member in 1997. In 1964 he proposed to the Publications Committee that they publish a series of field guides, and, with the enthusiastic support of Jack Gardiner, the Treasurer, he drafted samples for one on *Carex*. A nervous Publications Committee

approved, but asked that Tom Tutin should be co-opted as co-author. In fact, Clive wrote most of the book and organised the illustrations. It was published as *British sedges* in 1968, immediately becoming a best seller. Two more editions followed, in 1982 as *Sedges of the British Isles*, by A.C. Jermy, A.O. Chater and R.W. David (when it was officially called BSBI Handbook No. 1), and in 2007, by A.C. Jermy, D.A. Simpson, M.J.Y. Foley and M.S. Porter. It has sold at least 15,000 copies and remains the best seller of all the BSBI Handbooks. Meanwhile, in 1980, Tom Tutin had written Handbook No. 2, *Umbellifers of the British Isles*, and ten more Handbooks have followed. Clive designed the covers for seven of them in a very distinctive and attractive style.

Although no BSBI fern Handbooks have been published, Clive filled the gap first by producing jointly with Josephine Camus the *B.M. fern crib* in 1987, specifically to help BSBI members, and they expanded this into the very widely used *The illustrated field guide to ferns and allied plants of the British Isles* in 1991. Further modifications were made by Clive for the inclusion of much of this work in the relevant section of the BSBI publication *Plant crib 1998*, by Tim Rich and Clive. Clive had been a referee for ferns (latterly for *Isoetes*) and Cyperaceae (chiefly *Carex*) from at least 1960. He was mentor and field companion to several generations of *Carex* enthusiasts, especially R.W. David, with whom he visited numerous localities, especially in Scotland. Clive's fond appreciation of his co-enthusiast can be found in *Dick David remembered by his friends*, ed. L.A. Davies (1994). His field courses, chiefly at Kindrogan, were inspirational for many. He was heavily involved in field work by the British Museum (Natural History) Botany Department on Mull, and co-edited the resulting *The island of Mull, a survey of its flora and environment* in 1978, with Jim Crabbe.

Clive joined the British Pteridological Society in 1959, edited the *British Fern Gazette/Fern Gazette* for 16 years, edited their Special Publications for 18 years, was President from 1982-1985, was given its Stansfield Medal in 1991, and was made an Honorary Member in 2002. He is generally credited with moving the Society from being largely for British amateurs and fern-growers to an international society involving professional pteridologists as well, without losing its popular appeal. Among his many collaborations with other members in Britain were those with Christopher Fraser-Jenkins, Hugh Corley and Mary Gibby on *Dryopteris*, the setting up of 'Affinis Watch' with Anthony Pigott, studies on *Diphasiastrum* with Tess Styles, and the widely supported *Pilularia* survey in the 1980s. In 1989 Donald Farrar of Iowa State University, who had earlier established that the gametophyte of *Trichomanes speciosum* could lead a long-term independent existence, was visiting Britain, and was led by Fred Rumsey and Clive to discover it new for Europe in the Lake District and Yorkshire. Clive enthusiastically showed others of us how to find and recognise it, and recorded it himself in many places elsewhere in Europe. *Isoetes* was one of his main interests, and many botanists will remember his often alarming aquatic exploits in search of the species and the hybrid *I. ×hickeyi*. It was his collections from lakes in Cardiganshire, sent to Don Britton in Canada to make the extremely difficult chromosome counts, that confirmed the hybrid's existence in Britain.

In the wider world Clive was heavily involved in organising three of the B.P.S. international symposia in 1972, 1991 and 2001. In 1981 he instigated the International Association of Pteridologists, and was its chairman until 1987. In 1978 he made a trail-blazing visit to China, meeting the great pteridologist Ren-Chang Ching. Clive's lectures there on the cytotaxonomy of *Dryopteris* led to a renewal of cytotaxonomic research on Chinese ferns that had been brutally stopped twelve years earlier by the Cultural Revolution. He collected and made

contacts in much of Europe and a dozen countries elsewhere in the world. Some of these were major expeditions, such as a six-month one to New Guinea in the 1960s, and the Royal Geographical Society's expedition to Gunung-Mulu in Sarawak in 1977, of which he was the Scientific Coordinator. The R.G.S. gave him its Murchison Award in 1980, and he was very active in this Society, being the first head of its Expedition Advisory Centre, and a trustee of its Young Explorers Trust. Among others, he notably collaborated and collected with Trevor Walker in Trinidad and Malesia, and with Ronnie Viane in France and Spain, as well as on another visit to China. His collections, chiefly of ferns, amounted to some 25,000 numbers and have added immeasurably to pteridophyte taxonomy. His concerns for conservation, nurtured by the Norfolk Naturalists Trust, led to his involvement with the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation when he moved to live there, and his membership of the BSBI Conservation Committee. His discussion paper *The role of the BSBI in plant conservation today*, submitted in 1981, was instrumental in determining the Society's policies. Feeling strongly that there was a need for all botanists to be more involved in conservation, Clive was the guiding force behind the Conservation Association of Botanical Societies, known as CABS, involving the BSBI, the British Pteridological Society, the British Bryological Society, the Wild Flower Society and others, and raised the funds to employ Nick Stewart at the South London Botanical Institute to further its aims. CABS was later absorbed into Plantlife. On an international scale, he was a committee member of the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society, and co-chairman of the I.U.C.N. Species Survival Commission Pteridophyte Specialist Group.

Apart from the works already mentioned, Clive's more important publications included *A new generic sequence for the pteridophyte herbarium*, with Jim Crabbe and John Mickel in 1975, *Atlas of ferns of the British Isles*, with Henry Arnold, Lynne Farrell and Franklyn Perring in 1978 (a joint production with the

BSBI), *The genus Selaginella in tropical South America*, with Josephine Rankin in 1981 (a completion of the work by Clive's predecessor at the British Museum (Natural History), A.H.G. Alston), *Cytotaxonomic studies of the ferns of Trinidad*, with Trevor Walker in 1985, and *A world of ferns*, with Josephine Camus and Barry Thomas in 1991. A full list of his publications is expected in *The Fern Gazette*.

Clive was immensely energetic in the field, sometimes dangerously so – in Mull he once fell from a sea cliff at low tide and was so badly injured that if he had been on his own and not been helicoptered out he would undoubtedly have drowned. He was in his element when in company with others, when discussing ferns or sedges, or when working up with colleagues ideas for meetings or expeditions. He was not an ivory tower scientist, and he did have a tendency to over-reach himself and not bring things to a conclusion. He was a wonderful, if sometimes rather demanding, companion in the field, and innumerable BSBI members will remember gratefully visits by him to their patch, the field meetings and workshops that he ran, and his invariable encouragement and help for beginners and those keen to learn. His spontaneous generosity was exemplified when he gave the BSBI's handbooks editor a case of wine on the publication of ed. 3 of *Sedges* as a reward for

his labours. At his Otford home in Kent he and his wife Alma were the hospitable hosts to many friends and colleagues. They had two children, Nerida and Stuart. Alma died in 1997, and in 1999 Clive married an old family friend, Valerie, and thereafter lived at Staunton-on-Arrow in Herefordshire. Ten years later Clive had a severe stroke, leaving him physically very incapacitated and finding speech slow and difficult, although he was still always keen to hear about and discuss ferns and the work of colleagues. Yet another cruel blow fell when Valerie, who looked after him at home with the help of carers, unexpectedly died in her sleep, and Clive was moved to a care home near Wrexham, close to where Stuart lived with his family as vicar of St Martin's. He died on 25th July 2014 at the age of 82.

In compiling this obituary I have made extensive use of tributes by Josephine Camus, Alison Paul, Ronnie Viane and Martin Rickard. My own memories of him, in the field in Scotland and Wales, as a colleague at the Natural History Museum, and as a friend at each other's homes, are so multifarious, and yet so small a part of his total activities, that it is remarkable to consider how full a life he lived and how many people he influenced.

ARTHUR CHATER



Clive Jermy at Cors Caron, Cardiganshire, August 2003. Photo A.O. Chater



The intrepid explorer, not Borneo but Glynhir, Carmarthenshire, July 2004. Photo A.O. Chater