

Address by Gina Murrell at an event to celebrate the completion of FoGBI held at the Sainsbury Laboratory, Cambridge, on 28 June 2018

It's wonderful to have family, friends and colleagues here to celebrate the completion of Sell and Murrell's five-volume *Flora of Great Britain and Ireland*, usually referred to as FoGBI. Peter greatly appreciated this sort of occasion; afternoon tea and botanical debate were always perfect for him. So, it is with Peter in mind that I want to say a few words of thanks to Katrina Halliday, Executive Publisher in Life Sciences at Cambridge University Press, and Lauren Gardener, Curator of the Cambridge University Herbarium, for jointly planning and arranging this splendid afternoon of celebration here at the Sainsbury Laboratory. Many thanks also to our speakers, Chris Preston, Shahina Ghazanfar and Fred Rumsey, for their engaging talks.

There are so many people to thank who have been associated with the publication of FoGBI. To list everyone from its concept would require me standing here for a very long time, so I hope it's acceptable to thank collectively all at CUP from the 1990s to the present time, including our original Science Editors, Alan Crowden and Maria Murphy, through to Katrina Halliday and Jenny van der Meijden today, not forgetting Copy Editors and others in the publishing team.

When it comes to contributors to FoGBI, taxonomists have been more than generous in allowing their research, observations and findings to be included in our flora. There has always been amazing support for our work; therefore I do hope we have given due thanks over the years, both personally and in written acknowledgements and credit lines throughout the volumes.

I am sure Tim Sell would want me on behalf of his father to show our appreciation to all who have contributed to the very handsome tome that is Volume 1, our final book! Alan Leslie has allowed us to include his account and illustrations of the *Ranunculus auricomus* group and David Tennant has supplied much information and help on *Salix*. We are also grateful to and must thank Sarah Holmes, botanical illustrator, for her line drawings in the last two volumes.

Now it comes to the contributions made by 'The Team'. 'The Team' are Arthur Chater, Gwynn Ellis, Philip Oswald and Chris Preston, without whom volumes 2 and 1 might not have made it to press. Towards the end of 2011, as I was retiring from the University and moving away from Cambridge, Peter and I discussed our hopes for the remaining two volumes. At that time the texts of both were written, but only Volume 1 was at typed first draft stage. Happily, 'The Team' of four friends agreed to take up the challenge of seeing the project to completion. I have no wish to embarrass them with individual praise for their achievements, which are truly great. I

will just say thank you, 'Team', for the part each of you played in bringing FoGBI volumes 2 and 1 to fruition.

For those who do not know how the flora came about, I would like briefly to go back to the 1970s and '80s, when Peter Sell and other British botanists were discussing the viability of a definitive flora of Great Britain and Ireland, perhaps to follow on from the *Flora Europaea* project. Unfortunately, despite the enthusiasm of botanists at that time, grant funding could not be obtained. Some time during 1986 Peter put forward a suggestion to Cambridge University Press and was requested by them to write further with more detail on how such a flora might be done. This letter, which seems to be one in a series, was addressed to Martin Walters, Biology Editor at CUP, and finds Peter suggesting a flora in 16 volumes!!!! It was to be in the style of Hegi's *Illustrierte Flora von Mitteleuropa*, using Stella Ross-Craig's line drawings to illustrate it, if permission could be obtained. Well, that didn't happen!

On 18th November 1986, Peter wrote to me setting out his ideas for a critical flora, inviting me to join him as co-author, briefly discussing the research required and urging me to consider this proposal carefully taking into account my own family commitments. I had worked with Peter in the 1960s and '70s at the old Herbarium, during which time **CGE** made substantial contribution to floras such as *Flora Europaea*, *Flora of Turkey* and *A Flora of the Maltese Islands*. I therefore had some understanding of what would be entailed. Over the next six months there were many meetings with Peter to add substance to his proposal and to give me a better understanding of how the whole could be achieved.

A programme was worked out for our first year's research, with lists of plant families, genera and species to be looked at, both in the field and in UK herbaria. We discussed the format of a five-volume flora to be published in reverse volume order; we noted the microscope work and illustrations to be considered and the requirements from CUP we would have to meet. We could see no problems!! Therefore, armed with presses and field gear, maps and a small library of floras, we started our colossal task. Our first field trip was on 13th May 1987, the location Dunwich in Suffolk, the weather heavy snow, but we still managed to find and describe *Ceratocarpus claviculata*, which was flowering on the heath. *The Flora of Great Britain and Ireland* was underway!