

## Patricia Anne Evans

(1929-2015)

Pat Evans died on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at her home at Nedd in Sutherland, a few days short of her 86<sup>th</sup> birthday. She had been a member of the BSBI since 1952, when she was a post-graduate research student at the University College, Leicester, and served as Recorder for vice-county 108 (West Sutherland) from 1993 until her death. She was co-editor, with Tony (A.L.) Primavesi, of the *Flora of Leicestershire* (1988), and co-author, with Ian Evans and Gordon Rothero, of the *Flora of Assynt* (2002).

Pat was born in Leicester on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1929, the only child of John Kenneth Padmore, a boot agent, and Nancy Wilson Padmore (née Aitken), who was from a Scottish Borders family. Her father was a man of considerable character. As a 15-year-old, in the middle of the First World War, he had, with the connivance of his headmaster, falsified his age and enlisted as a midshipman in the Royal Navy. Early in Pat's childhood, the family moved to Thurcaston, a village on the edge of the Charnwood Forest, an area that Pat came to love. She was encouraged in her natural history interests by her father, who took her bird's-nesting and also taught her fly fishing, and she inherited his love of gardening. She was educated at Loughborough High School, where a school prize for 1939, *A pocket-book of British wild flowers* (Hall, 1937), is evidence of an early interest in the world of plants. Later prizes, chosen by her, reveal a breadth of interest in the outdoors that was perhaps then unusual for a girl. In 1942 she had *Everest: the challenge* (Younghusband, 1936) and the following year *Big game hunting and collecting in East Africa, 1903-1926* (Kittenberger, 1929). She left at 17 to take additional science courses at Leicester Technical College to qualify her for university entry.

Thwarted in her ambition to read horticulture at Reading University by the numbers of returning servicemen from the Second World

War, she opted in 1947, happily as it proved, for the four year course in Natural Sciences at Trinity College, Dublin. She specialised in botany and graduated with 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Honours in December 1951. David Webb was Professor of Plant Biology there from 1949, and she gained an excellent knowledge of the plant-life of Ireland, particularly the west, on his field courses and also assisted him as a volunteer in the University Herbarium. However, her time at Dublin was not all work and no play. On one occasion her photograph graced the front page of the *Irish Times*. She had been spotted, wearing a New Look dress, at a race meeting at The Curragh, when she was supposed to be doing a physics practical. She retained an interest in clothes throughout her life, and became a competent seamstress, even fashioning her own jeans for fieldwork.

On her return from Dublin, Pat took up, in October 1951, a post-graduate research post in the Botany Department of the University College, Leicester, under Professor T.G. Tutin, working on varieties of Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and its close relatives *R. scoticus* and *R. reptans*. This research involved fieldwork in Orkney and Shetland and the subsequent cultivation of material and examination of pollen fertility and other characteristics at Leicester. It resulted in the designation of three sub-species of *R. flammula*: ssp. *flammula*, ssp. *scoticus* (E.S.Marshall) A.R.Clapham, and ssp. *minimus* (A.Benn) Padmore, an interpretation that is still accepted. Pat left in June 1954, shortly after her marriage, in April, to local architect Laurie Candlish. Their son, Nicholas, was born in 1956, and results of her research were not published until a year later (Padmore, 1957).

In the late 1950s, the Candlish family moved to Woodhouse Eaves in the Charnwood Forest, where in 1960 Pat was one of the founder members of the Loughborough Naturalists' Club. She served this still-flour-

ishing organisation as Hon. Secretary for five years (1964-1969) and continued as Editor of its quarterly newsletter *Heritage* (a name she suggested) for a further sixteen years (1969-1985), culminating in the 100<sup>th</sup> (Silver Jubilee) issue of February 1986. She also actively participated in the work of the scientific committees and served on the Council of the Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation, and was a member of the management committee for their large Charnwood Lodge Nature Reserve.

Pat was also a founder member, in 1967, of the Leicestershire Flora Committee, set up by Ian Evans of Leicester Museums and Tony Primavesi of Ratcliffe College to work towards a new tetrad flora of the county. Ian and Tony served respectively as Chairman and Hon. Secretary/Editor. She undertook fieldwork in the Charnwood Forest area, acted as a referee, and later helped Tony in the onerous task of correcting and editing draft texts, by a number of authors, as well as making her own contribution. It was a mark of his gratitude that he insisted that her name (as 'junior' co-editor, she always maintained) should share the title page of the *Flora of Leicestershire*, which was published in 1988.

In the mid 1960s, she embarked on two part-time occupations, adult education and journalism, that brought her to the attention of an audience well beyond local natural history circles. She tutored courses in natural history, ecology and plant identification for the Workers Educational Association and University Extra-mural Departments, and gave numerous talks, all illustrated by her own photographs. For ten years (1966-1975) she wrote a monthly nature article for the *Coalville Times*, and then transferred to the *Leicester Mercury*, for whom she wrote a weekly column for a further 16 years (1975-1991), based always, she insisted, on her own observations. She also wrote longer articles for the quarterly magazine *Leicestershire and Rutland Heritage* (1988-1991).

By 1972, Pat and her husband had separated, and were later divorced. In 1975, the Chairman of the Flora Committee, Ian Evans, was

falling behind in his allotted fieldwork, to the concern of Tony Primavesi, who, unknown to him, circulated an appeal for assistance. Pat volunteered for this task, with completely unintended consequences. Ian later separated from his wife and, following their divorce, he and Pat were married in 1978 and moved to a Victorian cottage at Keyham, which they had extensively refurbished. There, they spent a happy 14 years creating a decorative and productive garden out of a derelict half-acre, which included an old orchard.

Meanwhile, Pat had been developing her skills as an ecological survey worker. She had been involved in the Loughborough Naturalists' Club field-by-field surveys of Charnwood Forest (1967-1973), but her first contract was a survey of Bradgate Park for the Nature Conservancy in 1973. She subsequently undertook some 12 comprehensive surveys, often of large or geographically widespread sites, for their successor, the Nature Conservancy Council, latterly in conjunction with the Ecology Unit of the Leicestershire Museums Service, which was headed by Ian in his role of County Ecologist. They included the Grantham Canal (1975), roadside verges (1975-1976), sand and gravel workings (1976-1977), the Belvoir Woodlands (1977), the floodplains of the Rivers Soar and Wreake (1978), woodland SSSI (1978-1979), and habitat mapping of all the Leicestershire and Rutland SSSI (1982-1983).

In 1978, following a planning inquiry into the proposed establishment of three new deep coal mines in north-east Leicestershire, it had been realised by the Museums Service that site-specific ecological information was completely lacking for many areas of the county. Accordingly, Pat was appointed in 1978 as their first contract Field Ecologist, and set off on a field-by-field survey of the parish of Bottesford, spread over some 6,000 acres in the north-eastern corner of the county. This was a Phase 1 survey, supplemented by detailed target notes, photographs, and records of any animal life encountered. Her continuing work in this area was later complemented

by that of a large team funded by the Manpower Services Commission, but the methodology used was that developed by her in consultation with Ian.

Coincidentally, this first parish survey was one of the most rewarding, since in May 1978 she came across a group of hitherto-unknown unimproved grassland fields, which contained more than 4,000 Green-winged Orchids *Anacamptis morio*. This site, through the generosity of the Duke of Rutland, who owned it, later became the Muston Meadows National Nature Reserve. Pat continued her ecological survey work throughout the 1980s, and by 1991, through her efforts and those of the M.S.C.-funded team, all but three of 284 parishes in Leicestershire and Rutland (excluding Leicester) had been mapped and evaluated. She had surveyed 38 of those parishes, and at least 161 individual sites, and her personal contribution to knowledge of sites of ecological interest in Leicestershire and Rutland was quite unique.

Pat and Ian took their annual holidays either in south-western Ireland or on the west coast of Scotland, including many of the off-shore islands, walking, fishing and botanising. In 1982, they spent a week in June at the Drumbeg Hotel, in the parish of Assynt, the southernmost of the five large parishes that constitute vice-county 108, West Sutherland. They fell in love with the area, made longer visits in subsequent years, and in 1988 started work on a flora survey of the 164 tetrads that make up the parish. This did not meet with everyone's approval. It was suggested that a broader-ranging survey of selected tetrads across all of the wide-flung hectads of the vice-county might be more useful, and it was implied that extensive areas of the parish, on Lewisian gneiss, would prove botanically dreary. The first suggestion would have involved an inordinate amount of travelling and the second, as they had already surmised, proved quite unfounded.

At the end of July 1991, Ian took early retirement from the Leicestershire Museums Service. Pat and he moved two days later to a house they had had built on another half-acre plot, albeit of rockier ground, but with native

hazels and other trees, overlooking Loch Nedd, a mile east of Drumbeg. There they set about creating another garden, indulging Pat's long-held ambition to grow bog primulas and Himalayan poppies, amongst other things, with a large vegetable garden and greenhouse thrown in. Work on the Assynt tetrad survey continued apace in that and subsequent years. As luck would have it, they were visited in April 1992 by Gordon Rothero, who was reconnoitring the area for a field meeting of the British Bryological Society later that year. He returned twice or more times each year, surveyed the bryophytes and added substantially to knowledge of the montane phanerogams. He became a very good friend and co-author of the *Flora of Assynt*, published privately in 2002.

The three of them carried out almost all of the fieldwork involved in the flora survey, apart from that on a BSBI field meeting in 1993 and occasional visits by experts in particular groups. They walked more than 2,000 miles in some 400 tetrad visits, often well off tracks, accumulating 30,676 records of 694 taxa of phanerogams and 13,600 records of 501 taxa of bryophytes, the latter from a sample set of 99 tetrads. Since the fieldwork season is relatively short in the far north-west, June to mid-October at best, non-botanical visitors were discouraged during this time and holidays taken 'at home'. During the intervening winters, Pat inputted and mapped all the records, compiled the systematic accounts and, finally, produced the camera-ready text, with embedded maps, from which the *Flora* was printed. Ian's particular contributions were navigation and recording in the field, the introductory chapters, historical records and illustrations; other tasks were shared.

Eastern parts of West Sutherland were always a problem for Pat and Ian, since reaching them entailed long drives and/or overnight stays. However, following a BSBI meeting based at Tongue in 1995, they surveyed parts of Strath Naver and Strath Halladale as contributions to the 2002 *Atlas*. These visits were supplemented by ones to some very remote areas in 2003 and 2004 as part of the Local Change survey and also, in the same years, by

extensive Site Condition Monitoring surveys on the Invernaver and Strathy Coast SSSI. The latter, although focused on key species, did introduce them to the delights of previously unvisited parts of the north coast, although it was frustrating not to be able to do more general recording. These surveys allowed Pat to fine-tune her skills in the identification of eyebrights *Euphrasia* spp., and to further develop an interest in roses *Rosa* spp. that had started when she was working in Leicestershire with Tony Primavesi.

After 2002, Pat and Ian's fieldwork was focussed mainly on detailed tetrad recording of those parts of West Sutherland that are within a couple of hours' drive of Nedd. These included most of the lower ground round to the eastern side of Loch Eriboll, with a number of the offshore islands. Up to the end of 2014, some 200 tetrads had been surveyed, most of which had either never before been visited by botanists, or not recorded in detail. Most of the remaining 400 tetrads in the vice-county further to the east that have yet to be surveyed suffer from the same lack of information, although, given the underlying geology, some of these may not be quite so productive. Pat had also started work on a detailed analysis of recent records for a *Rare plant register for West Sutherland*, to which Ian's contribution was to be the historic records. Ian hopes to be able to complete this *RPR*, as a tribute to all her efforts, given some assistance with the now rather antiquated database on which the records were assembled.

This account of her life is inevitably dominated by Pat's botanical interests, but over two decades in Assynt she was an active member of a number of local organizations, including the Episcopalian Church, the Scottish Women's Rural Institute and the Assynt Field Club. She also contributed generously to local and national charities, especially those concerned with animal welfare.

As she moved into her eighties, Pat began to show some signs of memory loss and associated problems, which were diagnosed late in

2012 as the onset of vascular dementia. She retained, however, her physical capabilities, enjoyed walking and took an active interest in the garden, the wider landscape and the natural world, until a few weeks before her death. She also seemed to accept, with almost unflinching dignity and good humour, the limitations her condition imposed. Her funeral, in Lochinver on 9<sup>th</sup> May, was attended by a large number of family members and friends from near and far, and she is buried in the cemetery at Stoer, two hundred yards from the restless waters of The Minch.

Pat was proud of her Scottish ancestry, tracing it back in one line, on her mother's side, over some five generations, to John Crerar (1740-1840), who was for many years Head Forester to the Dukes of Atholl, and whose portrait, by Edwin Landseer, is at the Perth Museum and Art Gallery. He was also a noted fiddler. Her immediate family were few, since her father was one of two brothers who had married two sisters, but she took a delight in their interests and accomplishments. Her son, Nicholas, is a skilled motor engineer and keen fly fisherman. Her grandson, Struan, shares his father's interest in fishing and fly-tying and has recently graduated in countryside management at Ayr. Her granddaughter, Corinne, is a violinist, who has just completed her B.Mus. at Manchester.

Her own accomplishments were recently recognised by two awards. On 21<sup>st</sup> November 2014, the John Muir Trust presented her and Ian with a Special Volunteer's Award for their contribution to 'the knowledge, understanding and conservation of wild places in Scotland'. A year later, on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015, Ian and she shared, she posthumously, the National Biodiversity Network's first Gilbert White Award, for their 'outstanding contribution to biological recording and improving our understanding of the natural world'.

So far, this account of Pat's life and work has been couched in the customary third-person format, but I would like to conclude with a personal tribute. Pat was kind, generous, an accomplished naturalist, writer, cook and homemaker, an enthusiastic and skilled

gardener and a beloved mother and grandmother. She was capable and self-reliant, could be courageously independent, and did, on occasion, throw caution to the winds. She and I enjoyed a loving, supportive and productive partnership for nearly 40 years. She lived life to the full, and will be greatly missed by many, not least by me. I would like to thank family and friends, old and new, whose love, companionship in the field and help sustained us through all those years, particularly the last few.

**References:**

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IAN M. EVANS



Pat and Ian Evans, Fanagmore, W. Sutherland, with Foinaven in the background.  
Photo Gordon Rothero April 2002.



Awards for Biological Recording 2015, York. Ro Scott receiving award from Lord Selborne, NBN Trust, on behalf of Ian and the late Pat Evans. Photo copyright NBN Trust