

John Lewis 1921–2009

It is with regret that we report the death of John Lewis in May at the age of 87. John began his botanical career at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew where he worked on the *Flora of Tropical East Africa* from August 1950 to January 1957, in that time producing accounts of *Turneraceae* (1954) and *Rhizophoraceae* (1956). In 1957 he moved to the Natural History Museum (NHM) where he worked until his retirement in 1981. He was a founding member of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy and a member of the International Organisation of Plant Biosystematists. He served as the Secretary to the Systematics Association Committee for Descriptive Biological Terminology, which resulted in the paper and associated chart laying down the names and definitions of simple symmetrical plane shapes published in *Taxon* in 1962. This chart has been used in Stearn's *Botanical Latin* ever since. John maintained an interest in the theoretical aspects of taxonomy which was evident in his later papers on the classification of cultivars published in 1986.

His principal interest was in the tropical monocot family *Xyridaceae* and while he carried out detailed research in the family for over 20 years, the results were published in regional floristic accounts. It is evident that during his time at the NHM he developed an interest in conifers and in horticulture, as demonstrated by his article in the then fledgling journal, *The Plantsman*, on the flowering of *Xyris muelleri* at Kew in 1980. His interest in horticulture, and more specifically horticultural taxonomy, led to his involvement with the development of the *European Garden Flora* and his membership of the editorial team for the first two volumes. His interest in conifers is reflected also in his contribution of accounts for genera in *Cephalotaxaceae*, *Taxodiaceae*, *Cupressaceae* (some), *Pinaceae* (some) and *Ginkgoaceae* in the first volume (1986). Following retirement from the NHM, John took over from Humphrey Welch as International Conifer Registrar, for which the RHS is the ICRA. This proved to be

an extremely productive period for the Register, with the preliminary list being produced in 1985, followed by Part 1 of the Register (*Abies* to *Austrotaxus*) in 1987, Part 2 (*Bellis* to *Phaeosphaera*) in 1989, Part 3 (*Chamaecyparis*, *Cupressus* & × *Cupressocyparis*) in 1992 and finally the part that John himself was most proud of, Part 4 (*Juniperus*), in 1998. This last part was produced after John had handed over as Registrar to Piers Trehane. It is a testament to his activity that it has not been until this year, some 11 years later, that the next part of the register has been published.

John was also a keen painter and it was a delight to be shown by him a painting he made of a tree at Wisley in the 1970s, which was clearly a *Nyssa*, and which turned out to be the plant which subsequently was named as *Nyssa sylvatica* 'Wisley Bonfire', noted for its exceptionally fine autumn colouring. It was John's wish that the painting be presented to the RHS and it will be kept at Wisley.

John David