

Flora Europaea : a progress report, 1967-1970

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Flora Europaea — a progress report, 1967-1970

V. H. HEYWOOD

These Flora Europaea symposia are very important occasions as they are the only means we have of bringing as many members of the organization as possible together to discuss our progress, achievements, failures and problems.

Due to the International Botanical Congress held last year in Seattle, the interval between the 5th and 6th of our Symposia has been 3 years instead of the usual two. There is, therefore, much ground to cover and I shall try to select some of the more important events of the past 3 years.

The major event, of course, was the publication of volume 2 in 1968. This volume contained many critical groups, in the *Rosaceae* and *Leguminosae*, for example, and has been well received by the taxonomic fraternity. Of course there have been criticisms of some of the treatments but this is inevitable and does not dishearten us. I shall return to some of these criticisms later.

Another major event was the transfer of the Secretariat from Liverpool to Reading, following my own move. This was accomplished very smoothly, without any serious disruption of our work. It did, however, involve us in many problems. The secretarial team which had been established for a number of years had to be disbanded and new staff appointed. All the secretarial work on the Flora is now carried out by a staff of two, Mrs. HUSAIN, assisted by Mrs. BENNETT, who are responsible for all the typing and clerical work.

There have also been changes in our group of Research Associates. Dr. Peter BALL ceased to work for us in 1969, having served the Flora for more than 10 years, during which period he contributed many accounts and assisted in the editorial duties. We are glad that he is still able to assist us on occasions with genera which he prepared for volume 3. Dr. Keith FERGUSON left us in 1969 on his appointment to a post at the Herbarium at Kew. Dr. FERGUSON was replaced by Mr. Ian RICHARDSON in August 1968 and Dr. BALL's successor is Dr. Robert DEFILIPPS who came to us from the Smithsonian Institution, Washington where he had been working on the Flora of Dominica project. Mr. Arthur CHATER continues to work for us as our Research Associate based at Leicester with Professor TUTIN. RICHARDSON and DEFILIPPS are based at Reading and spend considerable amounts of time at Kew and the British Museum.

The system of Flora Europaea Bursars has continued to operate successfully and Bursars have included Dr. SNOGERUP (Sweden) who worked on *Juncus* (1 month), Dr. BOULOS from Libya who worked on *Sonchus* and *Launaea* (1 month), Dr. Vera FERÁKOVÁ (Czechoslovakia) who worked on *Lactuca* (3 weeks), Dr. KOVANDA (Czechoslovakia) who worked on *Campanula*, *Orobancha*, *Cynoglossum* and assisted in the compilation of the "Index to European Taxonomic Literature" (9½ months), and Professor DOSTÁL (Czechoslovakia) who worked on *Centaurea* (1 month). All these visits have been very successful and the Bursars have made valuable contributions to the preparation of the final three volumes. We hope to invite further Bursars in the next year or two.

A major decision we made was to split the planned volume 3 into two. As a single volume it would have been too large to handle editorially (the proof reading alone, which is a highly complex operation with so many authors involved, would have taken about a year), and the book itself would have been physically too large — about 1000 pages of large format. Work has proceeded on both volumes 3 and 4 simultaneously although priority has been given to volume 3 which is virtually complete. There have been some delays in circulating the manuscripts — one of the commonest reasons being that the flow of manuscripts is very irregular and often several large ones are received for editing at the same time. Also, many manuscripts need extensive revision and modification before they can be circulated. Quite apart from any taxonomic, nomenclatural or distributional problems, a great deal of time is spent in revising the descriptions to make them conform with our conventions. The English has to be modified, the punctuation, the terminology, the sequence, etc. Keys have to be made to conform with the text and vice versa, according to whichever is correct when they disagree. Sometimes neither the text nor the keys are accurate! All this involves a great deal of work and is, of course, very time-consuming.

It might be useful to summarize the various operations to which manuscripts are subjected when they are submitted to the Family Editor in the first instance.

- A check has to be made to see if any species have been omitted. Frequently these are Russian, S. European or Mediterranean.
- A check is made to see if any recent monograph, revision or other relevant papers have been taken into account, although this often does not come to light until later stages.
- Synonymy is checked to see whether all the appropriate Basic Flora synonyms are included in the text and Standard Flora synonyms in the index. We have a card index of such synonyms for most families.
- Distributions are checked, especially by Professor WEBB as regards the literature.
- The references and abbreviation of names of authors, journals, etc. are checked to make them conform to our system and new ones are noted so that they can be incorporated into the Appendices.
- Descriptions and keys are revised, as mentioned above.
- Chromosome numbers are checked.

All this takes place before the manuscript stage II is prepared for circulation to Regional Advisers. The stage I manuscript is seen only by the Editorial Committee and the author.

The manuscript is also tested against herbarium material by members of the Editorial Committee and by our Research Associates in stage I or II, and sometimes we try them out on our students! All this leads quite often to suggested changes which are communicated to the author.

Of course the main taxonomic and distributional alterations are suggested by Regional Advisers. These vary from, "add Hu" or "delete B1" to several pages of detailed comments or even completely new versions of the manuscript. These comments have all to be collated and analyzed by the Family Editor and discussed with the authors; the geographical changes are communicated to Professor WEBB. As a result the stage III manuscript is often very different indeed from the original manuscript.

A major source of difficulties is that Regional Advisers naturally view their manuscripts in their local context and are often surprised at the treatment of local, endemic taxa. We on the other hand have to see things in a wider, European context. Local character combinations often break down when the whole range of a species group is studied and similar combinations are found to occur elsewhere in the total range, so that local endemics often have to be reduced in rank or placed in synonymy. Another problem is that even today very many species are known from too little material.

There is a tendency too for an East European author to give a good and detailed account of Eastern and say Central European species and an incomplete account of Western, especially Mediterranean species, and vice versa. This leads to a great deal of imbalance which we try to correct and persuade the authors to accept. For example, Balkan species as recognized by HAYEK, RECHINGER, etc. may be acceptable, in the sense that they can be keyed, in the Balkan peninsula but not when the species from other parts of Europe are considered. Thus traditionally accepted treatments have to be abandoned. To cite just one example, *Origanum viride* is exceedingly difficult to separate from *O. vulgare* in any way at all. In the Balkan Flora of HAYEK there is no need to do so, because *O. vulgare* does not occur. On the other hand *O. vulgare* is so variable in all the taxonomically useable characters — indumentum, shape, size and colour of bracts, corolla-colour, calyx, etc., etc., etc. that it is almost inseparable from *O. viride* and most other species.

Flora Europaea is a synthesis rather than a compilation. The synthesis may be unacceptable in some cases; in other cases, later studies may necessitate considerable revision to our treatments. All this is as it should be and it is a matter of great encouragement to us that so many taxonomic revisions of European plants seem to have been inspired (or even provoked) by Flora Europaea. This will make the preparation of a second edition by our successors much easier. We adopt the view that an honestly produced Flora, no matter what its defects are, can be revised. It is much more difficult to revise a non-existent Flora!

Two final points. Arrangements have been made to continue the publication of the "Index to European Taxonomic Literature". The Index for 1968 was

published in December 1970; that for 1969 is complete and being typed; that for 1970 is in preparation. Dr. BRUMMITT of Kew, Mr. D. H. KENT, who is responsible for the BSBI abstracts, Dr. KOVANDA and Mr. CHATER have been responsible for the greater part of the compilation and editing of these recent parts. Discussions have been held with other abstracting services about the future of the Index and about the possibilities of introducing some form of mechanization in its preparation and publication.

Arrangements have been made with our Sponsors, the Linnean Society of London, for the publication of our Notulae in their "Botanical Journal", following a decision to discontinue their publication in "Feddes Repertorium".

Finally, the continued financial support of the British Science Research Council must be acknowledged. This will come to an end in a few years from now and later on in this Symposium we must discuss the future of the Organization, including its financial prospects.

Altogether we have made good progress since the last Symposium, and it is a tribute to the exemplary international cooperation that *Flora Europaea* engenders.

DISCUSSION

FAVARGER asks whether the sources of the chromosome counts included in *Flora Europaea* could be published.

MOORE answers that the information about these sources is present, in a typewritten form, at the *Flora Europaea* Secretariat. It is the intention of the *Flora Europaea* Organization to make this information more generally available at some stage. The exact way in which this can be done has not yet been decided.

VALENTINE propose que les références aux sources de ces comptages soient publiées sous forme d'une liste séparée, éventuellement au sein d'une publication à caractère international.

FAVARGER appuie cette proposition et cite, comme exemples de comptages dont il n'a pu déceler la source, ceux publiés dans *Flora Europaea* pour le genre *Saxifraga*.

WALTERS draws attention to the fact that all the chromosome counts included in *Flora Europaea* were made on verified material of known wild European origin: this has been clearly stated in the preface. References to the published sources of these counts are produced, on request, by the *Flora Europaea* Secretariat. The question of publishing this information is at least in part a financial problem.