

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The appearance of Volume 4 of *British Plant Communities* brings us near the end of the publication of the results of the National Vegetation Classification. Sustaining commitment and interest through the years has been vital to the continuance of the work and, as coordinator of the NVC and editor of these volumes, I would like to record again my personal gratitude to Donald Pigott and Derek Ratcliffe, the co-chairman of our research team, to John Birks, Andrew Malloch, Michael Proctor and David Shimwell, the research supervisors and to Jacqui Huntley, Elaine Radford, Martin Wigginton and Paul Wilkins for their many and various contributions along the way. More widely, on their behalf, I wish to thank all those others who have assisted in preparing the descriptions of the aquatic, swamp and tall-herb fen vegetation that is included here.

Among the NVC team, it was David Shimwell and Elaine Radford who had particular responsibility for producing preliminary accounts of the swamp and fen communities and I was greatly helped by their hard work and experience. For aquatic vegetation, we also benefited from the brief secondment to the research team of Dr Michael Lock who, as well as carrying out some underwater sampling by diving, collated our own data on aquatics and helped with the early characterisation of communities.

We were fortunate, too, while working on these vegetation types to have Mrs Margaret Palmer as the Nominated Officer for the project within the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. She was already playing an important role in developing other methods for the survey of standing waters in Britain and, as well as being given access to the data which a range of projects had produced, we were much informed by her wide experience and through her comments on our work.

Among others involved in those projects, we are especially grateful to Dr Kevin Charman and Messrs Martin Alcock and Clive Doarks. Drs Terry Rowell and Nigel Holmes also made valuable comments on the manuscript at various stages and we had informative

discussions, too, with Mr John Ratcliffe and Ms Ros Hattey of the then Welsh Lowland Peatland Survey, Dr John Harvey of the National Trust, the Reverend Gordon Graham of the Durham Flora Project and the late Professor David Spence, whose enthusiastic understanding of aquatic vegetation is greatly missed by all of us.

Among other contributors of data and information on the vegetation types included here, we owe a debt, as throughout our work, to Messrs Eric Birse and Jim Robertson of what was then the Macaulay Institute in Aberdeen and also, from the then West Yorkshire Biological Data Bank, to Messrs Jack Lavin and Geoffrey Wilmore. As with the mires, Dr Bryan Wheeler was unfailingly generous in allowing us access to his data on swamps and tall-herb fens from base-rich wetlands throughout Britain and always informative and constructive in his comments on the developing classification.

Within the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Dr John Hopkins, who succeeded Margaret Palmer as Nominated Officer, has played a vital role in these closing years, helping steer the work to a successful conclusion with his commitment and understanding. At Cambridge University Press, Drs Alan Crowden and Maria Murphy have continued to provide stimulating encouragement with Mrs Jane Bulleid, as always, bringing her great skill and care to the task of sub-editing.

My appreciation of Mrs Carol Barlow, who was secretary to the NVC for more than a decade, is tempered only by my great regret at her recent departure from our team. Her constant accuracy, hard work and cheerfulness have been an enormous support throughout these critical years of the project. For this volume, I am extremely grateful to Mrs Michelle Needham for stepping into this breach and helping complete the preparation of the manuscript with care and enthusiasm.

Finally, as the work of the NVC has become more widely known through its publication in *British Plant Communities*, and its applications more diverse and

productive, I am increasingly appreciative of the welcome the scheme has received from a great variety of users, within and beyond the nature conservation and countryside agencies, in this country and also abroad.

Their conviction of the value of the NVC, their enthusiastic comments and criticisms through the years, their impatience to see the project complete, these have been crucial in helping see the work through towards its end.