

## HAROLD LESLIE KEER WHITEHOUSE (1917-2000)

Mark Lawley  
email: [mrbyology@gmail.com](mailto:mrbyology@gmail.com)

This is one in a series of articles about prominent British and Irish field-bryologists of the past. The author would be very pleased to learn of any information which supplements its content.

*A Social and Biographical History of British and Irish Field-bryologists* is also available on-line at <http://britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk/>

### *Botanical career*

Whitehouse became interested in natural history from an early age, stimulated by his father's knowledge and interests. As a schoolboy he studied bryophytes as well as vascular plants and birds, but neither knew nor met Henry Herbert Knight, who also lived in Cheltenham.

At Cambridge University he met Paul Richards and others interested in field-bryology, and in 1938 joined the first excursion of the Cambridge bryological group. His bryological interests were further stimulated when he joined Edmund Warburg at the Royal Air Force photographic unit in Medmenham, Buckinghamshire during the early part of the Second World War.

He joined the British Bryological Society in 1946, edited the *Transactions of the British Bryological Society* (which subsequently became the *Journal of Bryology*) from 1968 until 1977, and was elected president for 1982-3. He became an honorary member of the Society in 1988.

Whitehouse made detailed ecological studies of the arable bryoflora and taxonomic studies of tuberous mosses (which are particularly prominent constituents of arable fields), and described *Dicranella staphylina* as a new European species in 1969.

He discovered *Hennediella stanfordensis* new to Britain in Cornwall in 1958, and (with Crundwell) in 1991 distinguished three species in the *Gymnostomum calcareum* group.

With his wife Patricia, Whitehouse also became an accomplished stereo-photographer of bryophytes, and built up a very large collection of stereo-photographs of approximately 80% of British species.

Whitehouse's herbarium of Cambridgeshire plants and letters pertaining to Cambridgeshire are at the Cambridge Botanic Gardens. The rest of his herbarium and a set of his stereo-photographs were donated to the British Bryological Society. These are now at the National Museum and Gallery of Wales in Cardiff, with a second set of the

photographs going to Laval University in Canada. The photographs that went to Cardiff are available to view on the NMGW website ([www.museumwales.ac.uk/biosyb/external/bryophyte/](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/biosyb/external/bryophyte/))

### *Family background and biography*

Harold Whitehouse was born at Churchdown in Gloucestershire on April 13<sup>th</sup> 1917, a son of Arnold Arthur Gray Whitehouse (born in Bilston, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire in 1878) and Marjorie Kininmonth (*née* Keer, 1890).

Marjorie Kininmonth Keer's parents were Thomas William Keer (1855-1924) and Janet Emma (*née* Kininmonth, 1848/9-1943). Thomas Keer was a commercial traveller in 1881 and 1891; the Keers lived at 1, Bensham Manor Road, Croydon, Surrey in 1891. Janet Kininmonth was the third of ten children born to Peter Kininmonth (1815-1892), a farm bailiff at Chartwell Farm, Kent in 1881, and Ann Elizabeth (*née* Woodcock, 1821-1901). Peter Kininmonth's father David (born 1794), paternal grandfather Peter (1752-1827) and great-grandfather Alexander (born 1720) were all tenant farmers in Fife, Scotland.

Arnold Whitehouse's parents were Arthur Edward Whitehouse (1853-1905), an artist, and Caroline Ann (Annie) (*née* Gray, 1851-1945), daughter of Charles Gray (born 1819/20), a pharmaceutical chemist at Bilston, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire. Arthur Edward Whitehouse was the second of seven children born to Sarah (*née* Francis, 1823-1900) and William Frederick Hateley Whitehouse (1807-1882). William was born in Sedgley, Staffordshire to Hannah (*née* Hateley, 1778-1850) and William Whitehouse (1778-1847). William the father was the youngest of ten children born to Ferdinando Whitehouse (1728-1812), ironmonger of Sedgley, and his wife Elizabeth (*née* Jevon). Ferdinando's father William Whitehouse (born 1702) was in turn a son of Joseph Whitehouse (1682-1728), ironmonger, nailor and yeoman of Sedgley.

Harold's father Arnold attended St. Dunstan's College, Catford from 1887 until 1897. He then read mathematics at Queen's College, Cambridge, graduating B.A. in 1900. His first job was as an assistant master at Lymm Grammar School in 1901, but he soon moved to Southport Grammar School (1901-05). He studied physics at London University Tutorial College in 1905-06, before taking up a permanent teaching post at the Crypt Grammar School in Gloucester (1908-41), where he taught science. He married Marjorie Keer at Gloucester in 1913. They had three sons: Arthur Arnold Keer (1915-2003), then Harold, and then Roger. Arnold Whitehouse retired in 1941, and was living at Caledonia, Churchdown, Gloucestershire in 1952.

Arthur Arnold Keer Whitehouse wrote *Phenolic Resins* (1967. Iiffé Books). His son, Julian M. A. Whitehouse (born 1940) became Emeritus Professor at the Division of Primary Care and Population Health Science at Imperial College, London, and Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences.

Arnold Whitehouse was “an outstanding science-teacher .... interested in biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy and meteorology ... [and] attempted to reconcile his science with his Christian belief and to formulate a general philosophy of knowledge”. His journals and papers are at the Record Office in Gloucester (ref: D6035).

Harold Whitehouse followed in his father’s footsteps when he went to Queen’s College, Cambridge in 1936, where his bryological interests blossomed in the company of Paul Richards and others. He began a Ph.D. under the supervision of David Guthrie Catcheside, but the Second World War interrupted Whitehouse’s studies. He returned to Cambridge after hostilities ceased, completed his Ph.D. in the genetics of ascomycete fungi, and joined the staff of the Botany School, becoming lecturer in genetics in 1952, and reader in 1969. He retired in 1984, aged 67.

Whitehouse married Patricia Horlick (1922-1988) of Churchdown in 1948; they had two daughters, Jane and Anne. Patricia also graduated from Cambridge (in physiology), and completed a Ph.D. in endocrinology at University College, London, and a medical training at St. Thomas’s Hospital. She became a very skilful photographer, specializing in stereo-photography.

Harold Whitehouse died on January 18<sup>th</sup> 2000, and was buried at Barton Road cemetery, Cambridge.