

OBITUARY

IVAN MACKENZIE LAMB (ELKE MACKENZIE) (1911–1990)



Ivan Mackenzie Lamb, who died on January 27, 1990, made significant contributions to lichenology. Unfortunately, the project for which he will be remembered most, a world-wide monograph of the genus *Stereocaulon*, was not fully realized for economic reasons. The results of 30 years of meticulous field and herbaria study of *Stereocaulon* were published in an abridged form, without the beautiful specimen drawings that he had commissioned from professional artists, in the *Journal of the Hattori Botanical Laboratory* in 1977. A year later, in the same journal, Lamb published his keys to the species of *Stereocaulon*. Despite his keen disappointment in not being able to publish a complete monograph, both of these papers will be the standard reference works of this genus for many years. Exsiccate material, which Lamb had so carefully collected together with his original drawings of *Stereocaulon* species, were lost through mildew and fire during his stay in Costa Rica.

Lamb was born in London on 10 September 1911 and received his B.Sc. (1933) and D.Sc. (1943) degrees from Edinburgh University. His thesis was a monograph of the lichen genus *Placopsis*. From 1935–1946, he was Assistant, in charge of the lichen herbarium, at the British Museum (Natural History), London. During World War II, Lamb served as botanist, dog-driver and surveyor's assistant during a British expedition, Operation *Tabarin*, to the Falkland Islands and Antarctica. In 1947 Lamb accepted a position as Professor of Cryptogamic Botany at the University of Tucumán, Argentina. From 1950–53, he was curator of cryptogams at the National Museum of Canada at Ottawa and in 1953 became Director of the Farlow Herbarium at Harvard University, a position that he held until his retirement in 1972. He was elected an Honorary member of the British Lichen Society in 1974.

I first met Lamb at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, during the summer of 1955, when we were both enrolled in the Marine Botany course. Lamb wanted to learn more about marine algae (which he found almost as interesting as lichens) so that he could better curate and enlarge the collections at the Farlow. Our common interest in lichens led to my becoming his first graduate student at Harvard University the following year.

Lamb was the most considerate, patient, helpful and unselfish advisor that a graduate student could have wished for. He gave willingly of his time and knowledge and was always quick to praise and encourage in his gentle manner. He taught me Warén's micropipette technique for isolating bionts into culture and introduced me to the unknowns of photobiont taxonomy. His fascination with lichen synthesis, and the difficulties in achieving it, was passed on to me and obviously made a life-long impression. He taught me, by his own example, the meaning of scholarship.

Lamb travelled the world extensively to visit lichenologists, herbaria and to collect. In 1961 he visited McMurdo Sound, Antarctica, at the request of the National Science Foundation, to inspect the biological work and facilities there. He then visited Argentina, making excursions through the mountains of Tucumán and Salta provinces to collect *Stereocaulon* material and to Puerto Deseado on the Atlantic coast of Patagonia to make a representative collection of marine algae for the Farlow. In 1964, Lamb returned to Antarctica, to spend a summer at the Melchoir Islands, together with Martin Zimmerman and René Delépine, studying the sublittoral marine algae. Characteristic of his subtle humour, he called the expedition 'Operation Gooseflesh'. The team of researchers logged 32 dives, the deepest to 142 feet, and collected approximately 500 specimens of marine algae, all of which were examined and photographed (colour, macro- and micro-) in the living state; cultures of many were set up to obtain life-cycle information. Lamb also collected about 250 samples of lichens and bryophytes. He unsuccessfully tried to culture the non-trebouxioid photobiont of *Lecania* (*Thamnolecania*) *brialmontii* and the mycobiont of *Mastodia tessellata* but did isolate the *Trebouxia* biont of *Usnea antarctica* (thought by some investigators to be trentepohlioid). During this trip, Lamb collected and studied *Verrucaria serpuloides*, the only known permanently submerged marine lichen, which he discovered in 1944.

Lamb's publications include the *Index Nominum Lichenum* (1932–1960), published in 1963, studies of the lichens of Britain, Cape Breton Islands and

Antarctica, of frutescent Lecideaceae and of the lichen genera *Argopsis*, *Calathaspis* and *Compsocladium*. Lamb was a conservative taxonomist who advocated recognition of chemical strains rather than chemical species.

In several articles published as occasional papers of the Farlow Herbarium (1972, 1973), Lamb acknowledged the technical assistance of Miss Elke Mackenzie, who as lichenologists were to find out, became his alter ego for the remaining 18 years of his life.

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