



Citation for Professor Charles Gimingham for the award of the IEEM Medal on 18 November 2008 Pioneer in Research and Practice of Heathland Ecology

Charles Gimingham is an internationally respected Ecologist of over 60 years standing. He is very well known to the Institute having been a Patron since 2000. His life has been full – but only a few of his achievements are mentioned here.

Charles qualified with a first class BA from Cambridge in 1944 and soon moved to Aberdeen University for his PhD and later to become a Lecturer in the Botany Department. He settled down in Aberdeen to marry and raise his family of three daughters and to pursue a lifetime career of research and teaching. From that base he has applied his ecological knowledge in Europe, Africa, south east Asia, Japan and Antarctica. He was awarded a personal Chair in Botany in 1969 and became Head of Department and Regius Professor of Botany in 1981.

In tandem with his university career he found time to contribute knowledge and experience to various roles. At a time when scientifically based conservation practices were much needed, he served on the boards and technical advisory groups of the main institutions for further education and research both in the north east of Scotland and nationally, including the Countryside Commission for Scotland from 1980 to 1991.

He has been a prolific writer and reviewer of research papers and editor of journals – the Journal of Ecology for one. He was President of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh from 1982 to 1984, and in 1986 was elected President of the British Ecological Society.

Charles became Professor Emeritus in 1988 but he has continued to apply his knowledge and expertise to some of the key issues of the day. For example, in 1994 he was a member of the UK Biodiversity Steering Group, from which Biodiversity Action Plans have evolved. He has served on the North East Regional Board of Scottish Natural Heritage and on its Scientific Advisory Committee from 1996 to 1999, and was President of the Heather Trust in 2004.

*This was most appropriate as Charles has long been an advocate of the practical application of ecological knowledge to the management of heathlands and moorlands – habitats which play an important part in the economy of the uplands. It is for this work that he is perhaps best known and where he has exerted most influence. He pioneered an early leaflet on heather-burning, from which the present Muirburn Code has developed. His 1972 book *The Ecology of Heathlands* became a standard text and in 1993 *The Lowland Heathland Management Handbook* was a major contribution to the practical management of heathland habitats. Much of our understanding of ecological processes and the landscape character of the uplands is due to Charles' work and influence. Who better, then, to play a large part in the designation in 2003 of the new Cairngorms National Park, and in 2002, to edit *The Ecology, Land Use and Conservation of the Cairngorms*, the scientific basis for the Park's future research and management decisions?*

In recognition of his work he has been awarded several honours. Amongst these, he became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1961, a Fellow of the Institute of Biology in 1969, and a Doctor of Science at Cambridge University in 1977, and he was awarded an OBE in 1990. In 2004 he was made an Honorary Member of the British Ecological Society – their highest honour.

*Charles himself has said that his lifelong interest in *Calluna*, and also his approach to teaching, were inspired by A S Watt (of *Pattern and Process* fame) who in turn had been a student of Sir Arthur Tansley. That is a very impressive thought – a worthy example of continued 'succession' from the early 1900s!*

In that vein, perhaps the biggest lifetime contribution Charles has made is to our future – not just through the pursuit of scientific knowledge, but through the lives of those students from around the world whom he inspired with his teaching, advice and invaluable practical help.

Charles has always been approachable, and never afraid to get his hands dirty in the outdoor class room of a peat bog or when sharing the washing-up on field-courses. At a time when other Professors seemed remote, the affection with which he was held was apparent in the late 1970's, when his research students and staff dressed in identical T-shirts on which were the words 'Prof Gim Rules OK'. Many of his undergraduates and research students have gone on to be pioneers in their own right, in successful and influential careers in ecology not only in the UK but around the world.

Charles never draws attention to his own success and always shows great humility, whether hosting a conference, chairing a meeting or going with students to a local hostelry after a day's field-work.

Just as his research, books and emphasis on practical ecological management were pioneering, so was his approach to teaching. He continues to offer ecological and botanical advice to individuals, to comment on national policies and to contribute to public awareness of ecology.

Our Patron, Professor Emeritus Charles Henry Gimingham OBE BA PhD ScD FRSE FIBiol, is a most worthy recipient of the IEEM Medal.

This citation has been written by Dr Pat Rae and Dr Una Urquhart

Dr Andy Tasker, IEEM President
