



PEOPLE

WITH JULIET POUTEAUX



Following on from our presentation of the first-ever 12 Pride of Guernsey awards, we catch up with Young Achiever of the Year **George Garnett** and Parish Champions **John** and **Marilyn Garnham**

Vastness of China a magnet for young botanist George

by **Stephen King**

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YOUNG Achiever of the Year George Garnett is now one of the island's top botany experts, having travelled across the world to study plant life.

Currently finishing planning for his trip to the Yunnan province in China in order to study the *Dalbergia*, a large genus of trees and shrubs in the pea family, George said he wished to turn his 'passion' for botany into a career.

The 17-year-old won the Pride of Guernsey Young Achiever award because of his interest in and drive to learn about botany. However, he said he has not always been interested in the green outdoors.

'I guess it started when I was building a guitar in DT at school and got interested in the different timbers I could use, and that led to me looking more into the trees,' he said.

'It came from there I suppose – I mean I've always liked the outdoors and nature, but it was never my passion.'

George has visited the Peruvian Amazon on an expedition set up by the British Exploring Society. Along with 79 other people, he travelled to Peru to work with a local conservation group and observe the vast plant life of the rainforest.

'We split into groups of 10, and didn't really see the other groups too much,' he said.

'Along the way we did all sorts of conservation and monitoring work – we tracked butterflies, did mammal surveying, and our group did a lot of palm surveys.'

George said he couldn't think of any particular highlights from his trip to the Amazon because it was simply all so amazing.

Having now set his sights on China, he said it was the first ex-



George Garnett won the Pride of Guernsey Young Achiever of the Year award and is visiting China to study plant life. (Picture by Adrian Miller, 16628971)

pedition he had organised that would only be with people he had invited.

'I'm going with the goal of seeing the *Dalbergia*, so this is more focused.

'The *Dalbergia* is one group I've always been interested in. It produces rosewood, which is used in

making guitars, and while I don't do that any more it links back to what got me interested in the first place.

'Although I say it's all about the *Dalbergia*, I do like the exploring side of these trips, and there's something about China – it's just so vast,' he added.

Alongside his expeditions and holidays, George has also spent a great deal of time in the UK and given several presentations to audiences of experts. He said he had regularly spoken about the flora of Guernsey, which is 'surprisingly unique'.

Following the Pride of Guern-

sey awards evening, and now the feeling of winning has set in, George said he really enjoyed the event and was very proud to have won.

'I was amazed,' he admitted. 'I didn't think I had a chance of winning, but it is nice to be recognised.'