

THE SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was held on 25th March, 1961, at the Museum. There were no changes in the officers of the Society. On the same day a visit was made to Doddershall Park, by invitation of our Vice-President, Ivy, Lady Pigott-Brown, who showed a large and appreciative party round her most interesting house; we were particularly glad to have with us that day our senior Member, Sir Everard Duncombe, Bart., who joined the Society in January, 1908.

OUTING

In addition to the Doddershall visit, there was another good gathering on 22nd July, when we went to Dorney Court and Eton College. At Dorney we were shown round by our member, Colonel P. D. S. Palmer, whose family have lived there for 300 years; the church, on which much excellent restoration work has been done in recent years, was also much admired. After lunch we were welcomed at Eton by the Headmaster, who gave a delightfully erudite and witty introductory talk, after which we toured the main buildings in three parties.

LECTURES

Some lectures were arranged early in the year, but due to uncertainty about the availability of the Baker Room, none was held in the autumn; it is hoped to resume regular lectures in 1962, but possibly in other centres apart from Aylesbury.

OBITUARY

The deaths of the following members were notified in 1961:

Rev. A. G. Birch, Mrs. K. C. Challinor, Mr. A. H. Egginton, Mr. G. S. Gant, Mrs. L. M. High, Mr. E. F. Richardson and Mr. E. J. Rowlandson.

Mr. Sheffield Neave, C.M.G., O.B.E., of the well-known Essex family, was Secretary of the Zoological Society, 1942-52, and Director of the Imperial Institute of Etymology, 1942-46.

Mr. Charles W. Ivatts was a well-known and much-respected Aylesbury resident; he was the seventh generation of his family to have run the family shoemaking business in Kingsbury, founded by his great-great-great-great grandfather in 1723 and still on the same site although now in other hands. (See advertisement in Centenary Number of *Records*, Vol. XV, 1.)

E.V.

PARISH REGISTERS

The Registers of the following parishes, beginning in the years indicated, have been deposited with the Society for safe custody.

Chilton, 1690

Dorton, 1694

Grandborough, 1538

Hawridge, 1785

A.V.W.

NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

THE 1961 season began with a lecture on 21st January given in the Museum by A. C. Christie, B.Sc., of the Forestry Commission, Princes Risborough, on "Trees".

In February an ornithological week-end was arranged in conjunction with the British Trust for Ornithology and the Middle Thames Natural History Society at Missenden Abbey. This included talks by M. P. M. Richards and Derek Goodwin, a film *Wild Life in Finland* and a film *The Pattern of Bird Life in the Arctic Summer* made by members of the Oxford-Cambridge Expedition to Northern Europe in 1960. Practical work on mist-netting was demonstrated at the Tring Reservoirs.

On 11th March Professor G. P. Wells, F.R.S., gave an illustrated lecture in the Museum on *The Behaviour of Worms*.

A visit was made to the Dancers End Nature Reserve in April. On 6th May Mrs. Brunner gave permission for a visit to the Lake at Wotton Underwood to look at water birds and plants. Also in May members visited Ivinghoe Beacon to look at chalk plants and Downland birds. Flowers on the chalk was the object of an outing in the Tring area on 25th June.

With the co-operation of the Warden of Missenden Abbey a successful week-end was held on 30th June to 2nd July on "Trees". Dr. J. G. Dony, A. C. Christie, J. W. Hill and Sir Edward Salisbury took part and many aspects of trees and woodlands were discussed.

Visits of general interest were made to Bledlow and Marsworth in July and August. Also in July Bernard West conducted a party on an entomologist expedition at Cadsdean. In September Philip Street led a party on a repeat visit to Woburn Abbey to look at the animals; and in October Victor Scott took a party to the Heath and Reach area to look for fungus.

The R.S.P.B. film *Reserved for Birds* was shown at the Grammar School, Aylesbury, on 20th October; the audience was smaller than usual, but there was sufficient profit for Bardsey Bird Observatory and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Trust to have a cheque towards their funds.

As it was thought that the Museum would not be available for lectures in the autumn, the head mistress of the Farmhouse School, Wendover, invited us to hold our lectures in the school. More members than usual were present. We are most grateful for this kind offer.

In the first lecture, Philip Street told us of the preservation of wild life in zoos, with special reference to Heinz Heck's famous Zoological Park in Munich.

In December Lady Barlow talked of her experiences in Prague which she had visited in June 1961 at the invitation of the Academy of Sciences. The lectures were accompanied with slides and were most successful.

It may interest members to know that an unusual vetch was found and photographed at Wilstone; it is hoped that further observations to identify this one and a previously observed vetch near Marsworth will be carried out in 1962.

Some members helped to guard the Military Orchid site in May where flowering was good and depredations nil. It was not a good year for *Pyrola Minor* in the Wendover area, though there was much vegetative growth and formation of new patches. *Assarabacca* continues to flourish in spite of the blackthorn, and it is hoped that steps may be taken to preserve the small area near Halton.

Mrs. Susan Cowdy, who is now on the Council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the British Trust for Ornithology, reports that the year 1961 was another good breeding season for wild birds after a mild winter. Bullfinches,

goldfinches and tree sparrows increased in numbers; large flocks of the two latter species were noted in the county during the autumn on their southward migration. Bullfinches have increased to such an extent that they have now been taken off the list of protected birds in our county, as a result of complaints of damage to trees by fruit farmers in the south of the county.

Chemicals used in seed dressings and insecticides in agriculture were again responsible for many hundreds of bird deaths in our county. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have been researching into the causes of deaths of birds sent for examination and have found in nearly every case death was caused through certain poisons. This year the Government has been working on similar lines, with the result that a voluntary ban has been imposed on the use of certain seed dressings in the spring of 1962. The sparrow-hawk and kestrel have declined alarmingly in our county in the last few years; there is little doubt that secondary poisoning from toxics is the cause.

The Society visited Tring Reservoirs on one or two field days. Great crested grebe remain at about twelve breeding pairs, which is satisfactory. Several species of duck and warblers also had a good breeding season. During the past two years two species in particular have become regular winter visitors: notably the goosander and bearded tit. On 16th January, over 65 goosanders were seen, and up to five bearded tits were watched in the phragmites reeds on 29th February. This latter species is very rare in Great Britain, only breeding in the large reed beds of Norfolk and Suffolk.

A bird which has developed a new habit in recent years is the great spotted woodpecker, which now visits bird tables in towns and villages throughout our county as well as elsewhere in Britain. The green woodpecker, on the other hand, is becoming scarce in some areas and the stock dove has gone into rapid decline in numbers. The collared dove is a new species for the county; somewhat like a turtle dove to look at, it has extended its range in the last two decades from Eastern Europe and now breeds in Great Britain, though has not been recorded as nesting in Buckinghamshire so far.

The British Trust for Ornithology has asked us to help with a census of common birds in our county and Victor Scott is in charge of this.

We have joined the Council for Nature, which is co-ordinating the work of those wishing to protect the countryside, and this entitles the Natural History members to the bulletins the Council publishes.

The work of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalist Trust is also making headway. Various groups have formed a conservation corps, and work is being done to clear scrub from the Trust's Nature Reserve at The Lee. Those of us who are concerned with the Natural History of this area would be interested in the work of this Trust which is intimately connected with our Society. Air Marshal Sir Robert Saundby is the President. The Vice-Presidents are Lady Barlow representing Buckinghamshire, Dr. E. F. Warbury, Oxfordshire, and The Marquess of Willingdon, Berkshire. Richard Fitter is the General Secretary and Mrs. Susan Cowdy the Buckinghamshire Secretary.

I do hope members feel that progress is being made. I would like to thank my Committee, Lady Barlow, Mrs. Cowdy, Mr. Gowing, Mr. Glover, Mr. Grimmitt, Mr. Scott and Mr. Street for their help and co-operation during the year 1961.

J.M.G.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

(as at 31st December, 1961)

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