

Bristol Naturalists' Society

BULLETIN June 2008 No. 471

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CALENDAR for JUNE 2008

Wed 11	Folly Farm	Ornithology	19:00	page 6
Wed 18	Weston Woods, Wotton-u-Edge	Botany	11:00	page 9
Sat 21	Downs Phenology Walk	Society	10:00	page 2
Sun 22	Maes Knoll, nr Dundry	Invertebrate	14:00	page 8
Mon 23	Dramway & Siston Common	Botany	18:00	page 9
Wed 25	Somerset Levels	Ornithology	18:30	page 6
Sat 28	Lords Wood nr Hunstrete	Botany	10:30	page 9
Wed 2 July	Marshfield	Ornithology	18:30	page 6

BNS Library at Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery
 Open: Wed. 12.30-1.30pm, Sat. 10.15-12 noon
NB *Membership card + required for admission*

SOCIETY ITEMS

SOCIETY GENERAL FIELD WALK

THE DOWNS PHENOLOGY WALK

Saturday June 21 10.00 am

Leader Richard Bland (0117 973 4828)

Meet at the Peregrine Watch Point on Circular road. It is probably best to park on Ladies Mile and walk across as this is the second Peregrine Watch weekend, and London Camera Exchange will have a stand. The walk will introduce you to the Phenology Survey that monitors the dates of flowering of over 200 species on a weekly basis. Everyone will be able to participate and test their own ability to spot the native species in flower on this date, and to discover how this year compares with the past decade. The walk follows the cliff edge for exactly 1000 metres to the Suspension Bridge. Much of it follows the tarmac path, but some will be across the grass. I will, I fear, not be able to offer a return lift.

SOCIETY GENERAL FIELD WALK REPORT

Leigh Woods Saturday 12 April, general walk. A dozen members gathered for the first of the new General walks, and the President led us off around his kingdom, explaining the complex history of the site and the ambitious objectives of the National Trust, which included re-introducing cattle to the ancient wood pasture to help to re-create the landscape as it once was.

PHENOLOGY

The average temperature in April was 12.3°C, just below the long term average of 12.7°C. In other words April was normal. However as the year had begun warm, the colder temperatures of the two middle weeks of the month checked the onset of spring, and the arrival of migrants, so that by the end of the month what had begun as an early spring had become one that was rather later than usual, and was certainly a very sharp contrast with last year. Rainfall was also very close to the long-term average.

Richard Bland

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome to the Society: Mrs Wendy Budd, Mr David & Mrs Jan Fullman (Lichens, Mammals, Trees, Flowers), and as an affiliated member, the Biology Dept. of Bristol City Museum.



BRISTOL FESTIVAL OF NATURE

Saturday / Sunday 7th - 8th June

Millennium Square, Bristol

DON'T MISS IT!

SEVERN ESTUARY BARRAGE VI : Costs & benefits.

One of the clearest conclusions of the study by the Sustainable Development Commission is the huge range of unknowns in terms of the potential environmental impact. But far more unknown is the question of the costs and benefits. The SDC estimated that building it would cost £12bn at 2005 prices, spread over a period of a decade. It was also clear that the government would not want to commit government money to this, so this would have to be found privately. There would of course be income from the power generated, but its price would depend firstly on the price of the competition, ie the costs of the energy from nuclear, oil, coal, and gas fired plants, and secondly on the rate of return that the firm building it would want. There would also of course be the cost of servicing the £12bn debt until it was repaid. Of course a barrage would provide returns for a long time (120 years is the sort of figure expected) so, like the Channel Tunnel, it might expect in the long run to be a very good investment, but clearly might be very difficult to fund in the short term, and even more difficult to justify in the economic circumstances that exist today.

The power produced however is only one of the benefits anticipated by some. The thought of 40,000 jobs is attractive to run-down areas of Wales, which would certainly get the bulk of the heavy engineering work, though of course running the barrage would not be a labour intensive exercise. The area behind the barrage would be the same size as the Solent, the body of water between the Isle of Wight and Southampton, which is of course an international sailing playground. The tidal regime would not be as benign as that operating in those waters (where there is a double high tide twice every day), but even so some feel that the new tidal regime would encourage a massive development of boats and marinas on both sides of the estuary. With them would come massive opportunities for developing estuary-side leisure facilities - marinas, hotels, boatyards, holiday homes and all the fripperies that idle money brings. Another source of benefit would be the possibility of creating a new link across the estuary, by road or rail, or both, and, though this was not mentioned by the SDC, there has even been speculation that the barrage could be incorporated into an airport in the centre of the estuary, a regional communications hub that would take all the pressure off existing small airports in the region.

Conclusion.

But the SDC report will have none of this. It is absolutely clear that there would be nothing remotely sustainable about any of these proposals, and in a strong conclusion it notes that compliance with the Natura 2000 European directive is a central condition of a sustainable scheme and much wider and stronger action on climate change is a pre-requisite for the SDC's support. The Natura 2000 directive would require massive mitigation for the environmental damage that the barrage would create; indeed it is very hard to imagine what sort of money would be needed, and where it could be spent, to mitigate for the destruction of a unique estuarine system. The SDC is also clear that a barrage would be part of the problem, and not part of the solution. The problem is cheap electricity generated at large power stations and distributed over hundreds of miles of copper cable leading to massive losses of up to 50% of the power generated by the resistance in the cables. When fuel was cheap, and there was no concern about CO2 emissions, that did not seem to matter. For the next century power must be generated where it is used to maximize efficiency and minimize costs of ever more expensive fuel.

Richard Bland

A GREAT DAY OUT - HELPING BNS PROMOTIONS IS FUN!

Bringing BNS to a wider audience is a perennial challenge. During the coming year we plan to put in an appearance at a number of events, but in order to do so

WE NEED SUPPORT

If you'd like to go along to any of the events listed here – in any role from a 'spare pair of hands' to leading walks or giving talks, please get in touch.

Sat-Sunday **7-8 June**

Sunday **29 June**

Saturday **5 July**

Sunday **13 July**

(Bank Holiday) Mon. **25 August** **ROCK & FOSSIL** Geology event

Bristol **FESTIVAL OF NATURE**

BLAGDON Visitors' Centre

UNIVERSITY BOTANIC GARDENS

BLAGDON Visitors' Centre

ROCK & FOSSIL Geology event

If you're interested, the person to contact is

Mandy Leivers: 0117 903 0609, mleivers@bristolzoo.org.uk

LET EMAIL KEEP YOU UP-TO-DATE

Please keep the emails flowing in! The treasurer is keeping a database to enable the Society to keep in touch with you. If you haven't sent him your address, please do so (include initials, surname & postcode to confirm identity)!

The society is aware of the rules of the Data Protection Act, and your email address will only be used to enable the society to communicate with you.

Send to: slfay@bopenworld.com



READING GROUP / BOOK CLUB

Contact Margaret Fay 0117 921 4280



University of
BRISTOL

WILDLIFE, ECOLOGY & CONSERVATION

The University offers a 2-yr part-time course for people interested in wildlife, ecology & conservation. Starting Oct. 2008, the course will take place in Bristol on Weds. 6-9pm and on two Sats. 10am-5pm per term - so anyone can attend, even if working full-time. Past participants include BNS members. Topics include mammal & bird biology, amphibians & reptiles, plant ecology, animal behaviour, evolution, habitat ecology, conservation, field craft and identification skills.

The course is primarily for mature students and is ideally suited to those wanting to learn about the scientific study of wildlife. It also provides a first-step for those hoping for careers in conservation. For a brochure please contact: Mrs Sue Fletcher, Dept of Biological Sciences, Woodland Rd, Bristol, BS8 1UG. Tel: 0117 928 9035. Fax: 0117 331 7985. Email: wildlife-biology@bristol.ac.uk,

website: <http://www.bio.bris.ac.uk/wildlife>

LIBRARY

LIBRARY NEWS

Brian Tizard writes: **OTTERS** – Hans Kruuk. Otters are highly charismatic and popular animals of very considerable concern to conservationists worldwide. Written by the pre-eminent authority in the field, this book builds on the reputation of the author's landmark monograph on the European otter: *Wild Otters: Predation and Populations* (OUP 1995). Furthermore, its broader scope to include all species of otter in N America as well as Europe and elsewhere leads to a deeper synthesis that greatly expands the book's overall relevance and potential readership. As well as enchanting direct observations of the animals, there is guidance about how and where to watch and study them. From otters in the British and American lakes and rivers, to sea otters in the Pacific Ocean, giant otters in the Amazon and other species in Africa and Asia, this book provides an engaging approach to their fascinating existence, to the science needed to understand it, and to the very real threats to their survival.

The Practical Fossil Finder - Steve Parker. Divided into three main sections, this book first asks 'What is Palaeontology?' It outlines the history of the science, charting key discoveries from its beginnings up to the present day. The second asks what fossils are. It sets out the principles of basic geology and fossilisation and then explains step by step the principles of fossil finding from a practical point of view. The final section displays a series of time charts offering an invaluable visual reference to the various geological eras, together with maps to show the sites of the major fossil beds. Also to be found on the fossil shelf in the library: *Fossils* – Richard Moody's *How to Find and Identify over 3,000 Genera*; *The Macdonald Encyclopaedia of Fossils* – over 280 illustrations including the most significant animal & plant groups; The Audubon Society's Pocket Guide *Familiar Fossils of North America*.

LIBRARY ADMISSION

Those visiting the library need a Visitor's Badge. Museum reception will issue this when you produce a **current membership card** before coming to the staircase and pressing the intercom to call the librarian. You also have to **SIGN IN & OUT** at Reception using the staff signing-in/out sheet. This sheet acts as the fire roll-call and is used to ensure that all visitors have evacuated the building in case of a fire alarm. Should a fire alarm sound, visitors should leave the building by the nearest exit (signposted) and report to the roll-call point at the front of the building next to the University Wills Building. If the front of the building is not safe the roll-call will take place on University Road.

ORNITHOLOGY SECTION

PRESIDENT:- Mr. Ed Drewitt, 20 Severn Grange, Ison Hill Road, Henbury, BS10 7QA
ed_drewitt@hotmail.com (H)0117 950 5185
HON. SEC.:- Dr Mary Hill, 15 Montrose Ave, Redland, Bristol BS6 6EH
Mary@jhil15.fsnet.co.uk 0117 942 2193

FIELD MEETINGS

FOLLY FARM

Wednesday 11 June

Leader: David Warden

7.00pm, Evening meeting

Meet at 7pm in the lower car park at the bottom of the track to the farm at ST601604. We shall see the progress that the new woodland plantings have made before continuing above the renovated buildings to the ancient woodland of Dowlings Wood. The paths are steep and may be muddy after rain. The usual farmland and woodland birds will be seen with the possibility of Buzzard, Kestrel and Hobby. Ring the leader, David Warden, on 01275 332321 for further information

SOMERSET LEVELS for Barn owl etc.

Wednesday 25 June

Leader: Mike Johnson

6.30pm, Evening meeting

Meet at the English Nature Shapwick Heath car park ST448396. From the middle of Meare village on the B3151 Wedmore to Glastonbury road take the minor road south signposted Ashcott. After approximately 1 mile the car park is on the right just past the Railway Inn. There should be a wide variety of wetland and woodland birds including Hobby and Barn Owl. The walk will end about 9.45p.m. Further details from Mike Johnson, 0117 9532545

MARSHFIELD

Wednesday 2 July

Leader: Paul Farmer

6.30pm evening meeting

Coming from Bristol on the A430, take the first road signposted road to Marshfield, and meet outside the Marshfield Alms Houses (ST 774737). This will be a steady, easy walk of about 3 miles on side roads and possibly a bridle path - so strong shoes or walking boots are advisable. As on previous visits, we hope to see and hear Corn Buntings, as well as the usual cereal farmland species such as Skylark, Red Legged Partridge, Whitethroat, Yellow Bunting, Chaffinch, Linnnet, etc, and to hear quail calling. New members are always very welcome. Details from Paul Farmer on 0117 977 9799.

FIELDWORK

BRISTOL SWIFT SURVEY 2008

**NB All members of the BNS can do this
- not just those interested in birds**

If you see a party of Swifts during May, June, July, flying very fast at rooftop height or below (NOT High level), and screaming loudly, please record this. We want the date, time of day, number in the party and Address of the screaming party. The address can be a road name, a road number, or a Grid Reference. Simply send any records to me by e-mail - post or telephone (richardbland@blueyonder.co.uk, Richard Bland, 11 Percival Rd, Bristol BS8 3LN. 0117 973 4828.).

It is almost impossible to see Swifts entering or leaving their nest holes, but both members of the pair roost all night in their nests, and may be seen entering in the last hour before dark. I also want all records of actual nest sites. You can sometimes hear Swifts screaming from inside a roof - a good indication of a nest site! I will be sending out a note to all those who have recorded swifts nesting in their houses in the past.

ATLAS

The Summer session started well. If you have not already got involved, it is not too later to take on a tetrad, and survey it in the summer, and then again next winter. Go to the website www.birdatlas.net and follow instructions. There are plenty of tetrads that need doing on the Cotswolds and Mendips. Also during the breeding season we are trying to get the best evidence of breeding that we can for every species in every 10km square. Thus, birds breeding in your garden or nest box can be important, and should be entered as a Roving Record. Full details from the website or direct from me.

FIELD MEETING REPORTS

Leigh Woods It was cool and damp on April 10th when a party of around a dozen gathered to listen to birds and comment on plants. Few birds sang, but Goldfinches were enjoying the President's bird feeder, and Wrens and Robins and Blackbirds were prominent. The Green Hellebores were doing very well on the banks of the Fort, and there was comment on coppicing and pollarding.

Eastwood Farm 23 April. This walk ended up as a double walk, as Tony Titchen was unable to take a Tree Gaze, so some 24 people finally went on a combined Tree gaze and bird walk, and were introduced to this wonderful and largely unknown city nature reserve (and of course former rubbish dump, not to mention Tudor farmstead). It was a little early in the season for many of the dramatic plants, but trees of many species were coming into leaf, and some early migrants were in song.

Richard Bland

ORNITHOLOGY RECENT NEWS

This year the migration patterns have been a bit strange. Take for instance Wheatears on the coast south of Clevedon. For the first fortnight virtually none was seen and in the next week only about four. But on the last weekend twelve were reported on Saturday and 22 on Sunday, so overall a reasonable number passed through but all during a very short period at the end of the month. The situation was even more striking for Yellow Wagtails seen on Severnside. This is a species for which there is real long-term concern, and for most of the month very few were seen. But on one day during the third week 90 were counted on Northwick Warth, a remarkable sight and, taken as a whole, a reasonable number passed through.

Apart from the Wheatears a good number of species were noted passing through our region during the last weekend of April. The following were noted south of Clevedon over this weekend: Ringed and Little Ringed Plover, Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, Whimbrel, Greenshank and Common Sandpiper amongst the waders, Arctic and Common Tern, Cuckoo, House Martin, Swallow, Redstart and more Yellow Wagtail amongst the early passerines, and the warblers and allies included Grasshopper, Reed, Sedge, Lesser and Common Whitethroat, Chiffchaff and Willow, and finally a male Pied Flycatcher. And this was for one site only and did not include the residents such as Shelduck, Little Egret, Kestrel, Lapwing, Redshank, Turnstone, Cetti's Warbler, finches like Goldfinch and Linnet and Reed Bunting. So we can be reasonably sure that all is well amongst most if not all of our bird populations.

Harvey Rose H.E.Rose@bristol.ac.uk

INVERTEBRATE SECTION

PRESIDENT:- Ray Barnett 0117 942 5655 ray_barnett@bristol-city.gov.uk
HON. SECRETARY:- Tony Smith 0117 965 6566

FIELD MEETING

MAES KNOLL, DUNDRY

Sunday 22nd June

Leader: Tony Smith

2pm

Maes Knoll is an ancient earthwork in a commanding position on the Dundry Ridge south of Hartcliffe and Hengrove. This is an extensive area of calcareous grassland. Meet south of Maes Knoll by the road north from Norton Malreward, Grid ref. ST602654. Phone Tony Smith 0117 965 6566 for further details.

INVERTEBRATE NOTES FOR MAY 2008

Following the cold of April, May started with the temperature reaching the 70s and long hot sunshine. This began to make up for the slow start to the year and Hugh Welford had confirmed that the Small Blue was on the wing again in the Gully in the Avon Gorge on 6th May. This confirms last year's sightings represent an established colony. Reports on the Bristol Wildlife E-group included the first Odonata on the wing, a teneral Large Red Damselfly at Willsbridge Mill on the 1st spotted by Dan Eccles as well as Pied Shieldbug and the much smaller shieldbug *Legnotus limbosus* at Newton St Loe by Mike Williams on 22 April. The striking Blue Bug *Zicrona caerulea* was seen in the Gully in the Avon Gorge on 10th May by Ray Barnett, another species of shieldbug which is not met with that often in this area. The Invertebrate Section visit to Weston Woods on 4th May did not produce much of excitement although yet another very local shieldbug, *Troilus luridus* was swept from vegetation.

Holly Blue sightings have been very good, in contrast to Small Tortoiseshell which seems to be in extremely low numbers. Hornets continue to be reported more commonly.

Finally this appeal for assistance has been received from the University of Leeds:

The University of Leeds is seeking volunteers to survey butterflies in a research project investigating the ecological impacts of organic and conventional agriculture on farmland biodiversity. Your job would be to do transect walks along field margins. Good ID skills and interest in biodiversity surveying are essential. You would need to be available for at least 4 weeks during June and July 2008. The research sites are distributed across Central and Southern England. Therefore a driving licence, access to a car and willingness to travel would be helpful. We will cover direct costs of accommodation and travel to field sites (there is a possibility of extra funding becoming available, in which case we would be able to pay wages as well). For further details contact Dr Doreen Gabriel, tel 0113 3433078, D.Gabriel@leeds.ac.uk or Dr Jenny Hodgson, tel 07966 270158, jh69@york.ac.uk

EVENTS OF INTEREST - MOTH GROUP

Saturday 7th June 9.00pm Bristol & District Moth Group National Moth Night event at Bristol Zoo. A public event booked by contacting the Zoo direct. BNS members willing to assist with identification contact Mike Bailey on 01761 471000.

Friday 20th June Bristol & District Moth Group field meeting. Bristol Zoo's Hollywood site. Meet at 9.00pm at ST 578 814. This is a site owned by Bristol Zoo and used in the past as a quarantine site for Zoo animals, there are plans to develop it into a new Zoo facility for the public. For details on how to join the meeting contact Ray Barnett.

Saturday 28th June Bristol &* District Moth Group field meeting Elm Farm, Burnett, near Bath. Meet at: ST 665 653 at 8.30am to see the results of the catch of the previous night, in daylight. Heading south on B3116 from Keynsham, turn right in Burnett (at crossroads) and the left into Elm Farm. If heading north up B3116 take drive on left at ST 666 652. Plenty of parking.

Ray Barnett
12/05/08

BOTANY SECTION

PRESIDENT:- Tony Smith
HON. SEC:- Peter Hilton

0117 965 6566
0117 968 8031

FIELD MEETINGS

WESTRIDGE WOODS, WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE **Wednesday 18th June**
Leaders: Mark and Clare Kitchen **11am**
Meet at roadside layby ST754941 at 11am.

Joint meeting with Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society.

A day's meeting looking at the limestone flora of the woods of the south Cotswold scarp. *Rubus bucknellii*, an endemic, may be found. Bring lunch. Wear stout footwear. Contact: Mark Kitchen: 01453-810958

THE DRAMWAY AND SISTON COMMON **Monday 23rd June**
Leaders: Mark and Clare Kitchen **6pm**

Meet by the edge of the Common ST669745 at 6pm. To look at acid grassland and hopefully relocate the Maiden Pink (*Dianthus deltooides*) found there in 2007. Stout footwear required. Contact: Mark Kitchen: 01453-810958

LORDS WOOD **Saturday 28th June**
Leader: Nick Hudson **10.30am**

Meet at 10.30am on Birchwood Lane at ST631 631. Birchwood Lane is on the eastern side of the A37 approx halfway between Pensford and the Chelwood Roundabout. Approach the turn-off (Whitley Batts) from the south due to poor access from the north. Drive along the lane past South Leigh Farm and park by the signs at the edge of the wood. Please try to car share as parking is limited. The walk is approx 2Kms. Finish is expected at 1-2pm so bring lunch. Lords Wood is the site of an ancient but replanted woodland with two small streams flowing through it. Plants that may be found include: Lady-fern, Hard Fern, Narrow Buckler Fern, Star Sedge, Yellow Sedge and Sphagnum mosses. Contact: Nick Hudson: 07768-822340

WANTED FOR PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT

Locations of flowering specimens of:

Thorn Apple, Deadly Nightshade, Hemlock, Henbane, Giant Hogweed, Hemlock Water Dropwort, Monkshood. Graham Best, 12 Hortham Lane, Almondsbury, Bristol 01454 613189. g.best@talk21.com will be grateful for any information.

WANTED FOR INVERTEBRATE SURVEY ...

... of St George's Flower Bank, Easton in Gordano. I am trying to find someone who can do some surveying of invertebrates.

Fundraising has been pretty good so expenses to a reasonable level are available but we can't afford to employ a consultant.

*Robert Buck, 6 Heywood Terrace, Pill, North Somerset, BS20 0EA.
01275 373750 / 07884 400 221 robert.buck@tiscali.co.uk
details of Flower Bank on Parish website www.easton-in-gordano.org.uk*

“I shall never wish to touch another once my flora is off my hands”:

J. W. White (1846-1932) and the Flora of Bristol (part 1)

In this first part of a two-part essay Clive Lovatt describes how White's Flora of Bristol (1912) took six years to write and had been many years in gestation. A second part will appear next month, with details of the print run and sales, a note on the title of the book, and an illustrated account of White's own copy of his Flora. Although White did publish a supplement to his Flora in 1918, it is little more than a modest compilation of records in the annual Bristol Botany.

Notes for a new edition

On 21 July 1898, White announced to H. S. Thompson, “I am naturally desirous of getting together some knowledge of the careers of those botanists who have been associated with Bristol Botany”. This is perhaps the first indication of something radically different from a mere new edition of his earlier *Flora of the Bristol Coal-field* (1881-6), which is what the landscape interleaved copy he used and which Thompson apparently rescued is described as on its cover.

Although White later wrote that it was inevitable that any worker in the field would tend to become interested in what his predecessors had done, this is not necessarily the case. Perhaps chatting to Thomas Bruges Flower from the early 1880's may have awakened his interest, for Flower never hesitated to name-drop. Sadly though, White did not apparently meet or correspond with any of Flower's contemporaries - Thwaites, Stephens, Atwood, or even Swete, who only died in 1912, some months after the publication of the new flora.

Thompson also encouraged White (their relationship was complimentary) by lending him his old and rare books with lists of Bristol plants. White was rather pleased to write in 1895, “I have confirmed one of Dr Dyer's records...in the turf of Observatory Hill, and have never heard of the plant being observed there by anyone living”. White did not explain here or in the *Flora* (page 240) that he had collected it in 1884 and uncharacteristically mis-named it. I acted out the way he had found the little Bird's-foot Clover, *Trifolium ornithopodioides* (*Trigonella purpurascens* in the *Flora*) again in 1902 at the BNS meeting in September 2006, “the best plan is to sit down and examine the turf around foot by foot”.

White's record of Flower's herbarium in his *Flora* is thorough, but he seems to have found the inspection of the Bristol Museum material difficult. It was in “a most neglected state” in 1901 (he noted) but now much of it has gone. There is therefore little to show for the not insubstantial local botanical researches of the first 30 years of the 19th Century.

In March 1901, White commented on the subject of first records, “I have always considered it very risky to do so [quote first records] unless one has very accurate [meaning complete] information and [they] had better be left alone otherwise”. Clarke's book of *First Records of British Flowering Plants* was published in 1900 and White made full use of the entries whenever they related to his patch. Otherwise, local first records were not specifically mentioned in his *Flora*. In contrast, the *Flora of Gloucestershire* (1948) did do so, but not wholly successfully because this was the work of a committee and three successive editors over a long time.

In November 1901, in the same letter that began, “your specimen of *Carex depauperata* [Leigh Woods, 1888] is tantalising” (see my paper in our Proceedings for 1982), White admitted, “I have not relinquished the hope of publishing a new Bristol Flora”. Of course at the time White was regularly spending a month on the continent collecting plants with Bucknall and others.

The writing of the flora

It was in June 1905 - perhaps inspired by Druce's remarkable re-discovery after almost two centuries of that rare Somerset grass *Koeleria valesiana*, for that is how the letter begins - he wrote, I am not sorry that I have waited so long before writing a new edition of “*The Bristol Flora*”, so many good things have been made known to us of late. But I really have made a beginning a few days ago and hope to progress steadily”.

The next mention of progress in the surviving letters to Thompson is in October 1910. “My book is progressing - I have written as far as *Ulmus*” [page 532]. Accepting the

implication that the *Flora* was written in the taxonomic order of the day, the species accounts would have been 72% complete. The History of Bristol Botany shows signs of late additions and the shuffling of the order of accounts, and there is nothing I can say about the writing of the rest of the introductory material.

Incidentally, the elm accounts are quite odd. They have literature and field records of the extent of flowering for 1909 and 1910, but have very few localities. They do not mention the impressive avenue of low-pollarded Wych Elms down an ancient track-way in Leigh Woods; instead a fanciful rhyme is quoted. Nature poetry was a staple of many flora writers, but this seems to be White's only example.

No manuscript or proof copies of the flora are known, so we have to imagine how the creative talent was harnessed, how the careful checking was done. White once wrote that when his partner was away an hour before breakfast was the only time he could find an hour of leisure time. Such were some of the "spare moments of his business career" and it was not until 1918, when he was over 70, that he retired.

There is just one piece of the text in handwritten form. White wrote easily and well, and was happy to recycle his own work. The note of the Autumn Squill, *Scilla autumnalis*, on St Vincent's Rocks, written on a scrap of paper, matches the published account right up to the remark that there were two additional spots on the cliffs where it grew, which could not be precisely mentioned. The manuscript account emphasises this with the half-quotation that still needs no completion, "Wild horses would not etc. etc."

As for printing errors, there are very few. Page 245 has the name of the plant family incomplete. White corrected some in his own copy, such as the scarcely discernable wilding/wildling on page 594. I also once saw a copy for sale with a manuscript errata slip in White's hand with this and just a handful of other corrections.

As I have repeatedly quoted, on 3 July 1911, White compared his own efforts to Thompson's, who seemed to be "continually at work on new books". "I shall never wish to touch another once my flora is off my hands!" he wrote, adding, "I have just finished the whole, in the rough". He must have completed the whole of the monocotyledons, a quarter of the text of the species, in the last eight months. He was then proceeding onto yet another of his European trips, this time with Cedric and Mrs Bucknall to a chalet in the lower Alps, "on my return I will see about the publishing", he promised. This is what we shall do too.

To be continued next month

Clive Lovatt, Nairobi, Kenya 6 May 2008, cmlovatt@deloitte.com

Copyright notices: These notices should have appeared last month (Bulletin 470, May 2008) with the photos shown



H. S. Thompson as a young man in Birmingham, c. 1900, when he was working as a land surveyor and estate agent. One of three studio photos of Thomson at different dates, reproduced from their member records by permission of the Linnean Society of London. Thompson became a Fellow in 1901; White was one of his sponsors.



Colin Trapnell, a pioneering colonial ecologist, probably in modern-day Zambia in the 1930's. Copied from the website of the Oxford University Exploration Club, and reproduced with the permission of the current Chairman, Julian Cottee. Trapnell co-founded the Club in 1927.

MISCELLANY

'NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT' AT BRISTOL ZOO

Sat. 7th June, 9:15pm-11:30pm. On Saturday evening come and take part in 'National Moth Night' with local moth expert Mike Bailey. After a talk about the variety of moths found in the UK we'll be taking a look at some moth traps to see what's been out and about. £3.00. Run in conjunction with the Bristol & District Moth Group. Bookings: 0117 974 7307

AVON GORGE & DOWNS WILDLIFE PROJECT

Saturday 21st June - BRILLIANT BIRDS (Family walk). Hop along to the Downs for a bird spotting walk with Ed Drewitt. Find out about the birds that make this area their home, including super speedy peregrine falcons (the fastest birds in the world!). 9.00am – 10.30am £3.00. (No charge for under 5s). Run in conjunction with the Bristol Ornithological Club as part of a Peregrine Watch weekend.

Call Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project on 0117 9030609 to book

Tuesday 24th June - WILD WORDS (Walk). Join Libby Houston for a poetic perambulation on the Downs. Explore the hidden hoard of words in the wild, and raid its riches to make your own poem. 6.30pm – 8.30pm £3.00. This event is aimed at adults rather than children.

Call Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project on 0117 9030609 to book

BULLETIN DISTRIBUTION

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