

The Botanical Section

President and Recorder—W. WATSON, D.SC.,
Cedene, Cheddon Road, Taunton.

Secretary and Treasurer—J. B. KENYON, M.A., Taunton School.

Committee—

C. J. BARTLETT, N. G. HADDEN, E. J. HAMLIN, F. K. MAKINS, B.A.

THE thirtieth Annual Meeting was held in the Wyndham Hall on Thursday, 21 March 1940, with Dr. Watson, President, in the chair. The minutes of the last meeting were read and passed. Tribute was paid to the memory of three members of the Section, Miss A. Miller, Mr. H. D. Badcock and Mr. H. S. Thompson, who had died during the past year, and the President expressed the feeling of the meeting by speaking of this great and irreparable loss to Somerset botanists. He also mentioned that the executors of the late Miss Miller had presented most of her Botanical material to the Section.

Existing officers were re-elected for the coming year; the vacancies left by the deaths of Miss Miller and Mr. Thompson were not filled.

In his report the President referred to some of the interesting plants noted during the past year and to publications by members of the Society, most of which are recorded in the Report for the year 1939. He also called attention to the exhibit of wild flowers maintained in the Taunton Public Library and asked for members' help in procuring specimens and arranging the exhibit.

The Secretary reported that five Field-days had been held during the past year, all of which had been well attended. The number of members had been well maintained and the balance sheet showed a balance in the bank and in the hands of the Treasurer of £8 1s. 5d.

Field-days for the coming summer were discussed and various suggestions were made; it was left to the President

and Secretary to make such arrangements as might be possible in view of the difficulty of travelling in war-time. At the close of the meeting some interesting specimens were exhibited.

The low temperature at the beginning of 1940 was exceptional; it certainly lasted longer and the thermometer sank lower in our county than during any year in this century. (Even in Taunton the thermometer registered 30° F. of frost). Many of the less hardy shrubs and other plants were killed and when the thaw set in the odour of decaying cabbage plants was very noticeable. The effect on wild plants was chiefly shown in the retardation of flowering; at the latter end of February even such plants as the red dead-nettle, lesser celandine, annual poa and chickweed were flowerless. Later on in the year there was a wonderful show of dandelion heads all over the country and this can be attributed to the long tap roots of the plant. Those plants with more superficial capacity for the preservation of food substances took much longer time to recover from the effects of the cold weather, the dandelions had fewer competitors and flowered profusely. The ice-casing effects of the simultaneous frost and rain is given by Mr. Makins in the following account.

‘ On the 28 January 1940, rain froze as it fell and covered every solid object with a coat of transparent ice. Telegraph wires and twigs were each enclosed in an ice-cylinder sometimes more than an inch in thickness. At Bruton, snow began to fall thickly on the 29th and continued, with a falling temperature, till it lay to a depth of 4½ ins. on open, level ground. The air temperature sank to 25 degrees Fahrenheit and did not rise above freezing-point till the 3 February. The combined weight of ice and snow caused much damage to both wires and trees. In Somerset the effects have been shown in most upland woods but appear to have been greatest on the Mendip Hills, particularly round Shepton Mallet and Radstock. It was also severe along the Somerset-Wilts border. The trees most affected were poplar, oak, sycamore, ash, birch and beech, more or less in that order. Large branches were stripped off and in exposed places saplings and young trees were completely snapped off about 10 or 12 feet from the ground. Elm and conifers suffered little, though some damage to Scots Pine

was noticed in plantations near Dunster, where also fast-growing spruce which had been bent over failed to straighten up owing to internal injuries to the fibres.'

The Yorkshire Naturalists' Union honoured our President by making him their President for 1940. Owing to war conditions he was unable to attend all their meetings but was present at Austwick during Whitsuntide and the general meeting on 6 December. His presidential address on 'Yorkshire Associations, Lichenological and Otherwise' was given at the latter meeting.

The Wild Flower Table at the Taunton Public Library has been much appreciated during the summer. In compliance with many requests exhibits were shown there early on in the year and continued till the end of November. During the year about 500 different species were shown. Owing to the absence of the President at the Y.N.U. meeting, at Austwick during Whitsuntide, Mrs. and Miss Parry collected and arranged the plants exhibited.

Owing to difficulties of transit and other circumstances only two Field-days were arranged during the year. Sixteen members were conducted by Dr. Watson along the side of the river Tone at Taunton on 25 July. The pondweeds were in good flower, all the five duckweeds were seen, and many other members of the aquatic or subaquatic vegetation were studied.

On 10 August Mr. Hamlin led a party of eleven over the interesting turf-moor at Shapwick. Most members of the prolific flora peculiar to this district were noted. A flowering plant of the thorn-apple (*Datura stramonium*) was noticed. It had previously been recorded from the district, but no specimens had been noticed for some years. In one enclosure the abundance of luxuriant all-seed (*Radiola*) was noticeable. *Chenopodium polyspermum* occurred here and there whilst the marsh hog's-fennel (*Peucedanum palustre*) was frequently seen.

The loss of Harold Stuart Thompson is a serious one to our Society. For many years he was more or less responsible for the editing of these Reports, contributed many notes to them, was a member of our Committee, was an active participator in our field meetings and walked many miles over the hills and dales of Somerset in his studies of its flora. He was born of a

Quaker family at Bridgwater in 1870, educated at Sidcot and Bootham Schools and afterwards at University College, Bristol. He was at Cambridge, but did not take a degree as he remained for only a year. His work on the continent enabled him to write his most successful books, 'Alpine Plants of Europe' (1911), 'Subalpine Plants' (1912), and his admirable 'Flowering Plants of the Riviera' (1914). From 1900-1904 and 1920-1934 he acted as Hon. Sec. and Editor for the Watson Botanical Exchange Club, was elected an Associate of the Linnean Soc. in 1930 and contributed many articles and notes to the *Journal of Botany*. In 1915 he discovered the hybrid sedge, *Carex evoluta*, on the turf-moor, and was later responsible for the reservation of the Sharpham Moor Plot in which it was found. In his interesting account of the changes in the coast vegetation at Berrow, which were published in the *Journal of Ecology* in 1922 and 1930 he diverged from taxonomy to ecology. During recent years his memory was failing and he would not undertake editing our Report for 1939 on that account. He died at Clifton on 3 March 1940 and was buried at Bridgwater, the Society being represented by Mr. Corder and Mr. Hamlin. Sensitive in nature and apt to be discursive he had a great desire for justice and freedom, and his loss to the Section will be greatly felt.

The following articles referring to Somerset botany or botanists have been published during the past year. 'Bristol Botany in 1939', Cecil I. Sandwith, *Proc. Bristol Nat. Soc.* 'Obituary, Harold Stuart Thompson', H. W. Pugsley, *J. of Bot.*, 102-103. '*Potamogeton pusillus* in Great Britain', J. E. Dandy and G. Taylor, *J. of Bot.* Its distribution in N. Somerset is given on page 5. '*P. Berchtoldii* in Great Britain', *ibid.* Its distribution in Somerset is given on page 55. 'A new Fungus from Devon', F. Rilstone, *J. of Bot.*, 192. This refers to a fungus collected by our President and named *Gloniopsis Watsonii* after him.

RECORDER'S NOTES

The bracketed numbers refer to the ten divisions into which Somerset was divided by Murray. An asterisk denotes that the plant is new for that division.

- Thalictrum flavum* L. (9) Berrow. *E. J. Hamlin.*
- Ranunculus arvensis* L. (6)* Wambrook. *Miss Beviss.*
- Viola arvensis* Jord. (3) Lydeard Hill.
- Spergula sativa* Boenn. (3)* Arable land on the Cothelstone side of Lydeard Hill.
- Althaea officinalis* L. (9) Berrow. *E. J. Hamlin.*
- Impatiens glandulifera* Royle. This plant has established itself on river-banks in many parts of the country but has not been seen by me in Somerset. It is recorded in *Bristol Botany for 1939* from Abbotsleigh and Bath (10).
- Ornithopus perpusillus* L. (10) Long Ashton, *ibid.*
- Trifolium dubium* var. *pygmaeum* Soy-Will. This is usually considered to be merely a reduced form which a casual observer sometimes mistakes for *T. filiforme*. Observations on its manner of growth on a lawn show that this is sometimes different from that of the type. A patch of *T. dubium* can usually be traced to a central point whilst *pygmaeum* has many points of attachment owing to roots appearing on lateral shoots. Other points of difference:—fewer and smaller flowers in the head and these slightly deeper in colour, leaves smaller, are less constant. It is common in our county. It is possible that both the type and the form have races in which the lateral shoots are attached by means of adventitious roots.
- Vicia gracilis* Lois. (5) Near Pawlett towards the R. Parret. *E. J. Hamlin.*
- Myriophyllum spicatum* L. (4) Muchelney.
- Epilobium*. Hybrids of this genus are common. Some which have been noted are given below.
- Epilobium parviflorum* Schreb. × *tetragonum* Curt. (5) Stawel.
- E. montanum* L. × *roseum* Schreb. (3) Near Taunton. (5) Bridgwater.
- E. montanum* L. × *tetragonum*. (3) Taunton, etc.
- E. hirsutum* L. × *parviflorum*. (2) Stogumber and E. Quantox-head.
- E. hirsutum* × *montanum*. (3) Blagdon.
- Caucalis daucoides* L. (9) A casual in a chicken-run at Winscombe. *Miss Ashby.*

- Sambucus nigra* var. *viridis* Ait. In September of this year the two bushes of this pale-fruited elder, which were recorded in 1930 from Higher Blagdon (3), offered a strong contrast to the neighbouring bushes with black berries. Mr. Vivian-Neal informs me that there is another similar bush at Adcombe (3) on the opposite side of the valley.
- Centaurea nigra* L. The non-radiate form is rare in the Taunton district and generally so, except in the extreme west of the county. It occurs on Leigh Hill, Blackdowns. The drainage is towards the English Channel so that the locality is in division 6.
- Gentiana campestris* L. (2) Culbone. Abundant this year near Broomstreet Farm. *N. G. H.* A specimen sent by Mr. Hadden has been mounted for the herbarium.
- Plantago media* var. *longifolia* Meyer. This long-stalked variety with elliptical leaves has been noted in two places at Staplegrove (3)*. New to the county.
- Chenopodium urbicum* L. (3) Arable land, Rowford, near Taunton.
- Ulmus stricta* var. *sarniensis* (Loud.) Moss. (10)* Bathampton, probably planted. *Bristol Bot. in 1939.*
- Herminium monorchis* Br. (10) Bath. This has been previously recorded from the Bath district but has not been noticed there during this century, *ibid.*
- Aceras anthropophora* Br. (10)* Bath, *ibid.*
- Epipactis palustris* Sw. (4)* Hardington.
- Arum italicum* Mill. This has appeared during recent years near Staplegrove Church (3)*. Its pale-veined leaves appear several months before those of the common cuckoo-pint.
- Azolla filiculoides* L. (10)* Bathampton. *Brist. Bot. in 1939.*
- Lycopodium clavatum* L. (6)* Leigh Hill, Blackdowns.

The following lichens have been noted :

- Lecanora symmicta* var. *saepincola* (Ach.) Nyl. On pales, Huntspill Moor. New to vice-county 6.
- L. symmictera* Nyl. On pales, Taunton, Crowcombe, Yeovil, Wells, etc.
- Pertusaria amarescens* Nyl. On rocks, Dunkery. New to the county.

Cladonia cyathomorpha Wats. Buckland St. Mary. New to the county.

Stereocaulon denudatum Flk. Leigh Hill, Blackdowns, the most easterly portion of the county in which it has been found.

Crocynia Finkii B. de Lesd. Combe St. Nicholas. A record for vice-county 5.

C. sublanuginosa B. de Lesd. A specimen was obtained on a pine near Wambrook, but just outside the county boundary. It almost certainly occurs on the Somerset side.