

NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

Chairman: J. G. KEYLOCK

Secretary: H. L. M. PATTEN

Committee: The Chairman with Mrs. J. APPELYARD, H. W. BOON, Dr. H. M. CHAPPEL, G. L. FREWIN, Dr. E. G. NEAL, Mrs. P. A. WOLSELEY, M. G. MCFARLANE and Dr. D. A. CADWALLDR

Recorders:

- Botany** (Vascular Plants): A. D. HALLAM, Pencross House, Hemyock, Cullompton, Devon
(Bryophytes): Mrs. J. APPELYARD, Sunnyside, West Horrington, Wells
(Fungi): J. G. KEYLOCK, Sunnyside, East Street, Crewkerne
- Zoology** (Mammalia): Dr. E. G. NEAL, Mansell House, Milverton, Taunton
(Lepidoptera): Dr. H. M. CHAPPEL, The Old Rectory, Selworthy, Minehead
(Coleoptera): G. L. FREWIN, Wreath Green Cottage, Tatworth, Chard
(Odonata): J. G. KEYLOCK, Sunnyside, East Street, Crewkerne

INDOOR MEETINGS

Illustrated lectures were given by: Sq. Ldr. Norman Orr on "Birds of the New Forest", and Mrs. J. Wolseley on "The Wildflowers of the Maltese Islands".

A Social Evening was held in the N.F.U. Hall, Taunton on October 23rd.

FIELD MEETINGS 1973

KINGSBURY EPISCOPI, 26th July (Leader J. G. Keylock)

A large party met near Stembridge and explored the major rhines of West Moor. The water levels of the rhines were rather low but contained much of interest, including Small Pondweed (*Potamogeton berchtoldii*) and the much rarer Hair-like Pondweed (*Potamogeton trichoides*) mixed with Hora-wort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*). The sedges were mostly over but there was still plenty of fruiting Bladder Sedge (*Carex vesicaria*) and Cyperus Sedge (*Carex pseudocyperus*). The Water-parsnip (*Sium latifolium*) had been cut back in one of its main stations but was found well in flower in numerous places along the north-side of the moor along with plentiful Sea Club-rush (*Scirpus maritimus*). The afternoon was sunny and insects were plentiful. Mr. Frewin was delighted with the capture of a rather uncommon large longicorn, *Aromia moschata*, which feeds on willows. There were also several species of *Donacia* on the aquatic vegetation.

GREAT BREACH WOOD, 12th May (Leader J. G. Keylock)

The object of this visit was to start recording the flora, particularly the bryophytes of this new Somerset Trust Reserve, which is about 150 acres within a larger area of some 700 acres of mixed oak wood and plantations. The greater part of the wood lies on the plateau with a heavy calcareous clay overlying the Lias limestone. The exposed west-facing escarpment has thin immature soils which become very dry and liable to erosion. This scarp area supports an interesting calcicole flora including such species as Common Rockrose (*Helianthemum chamaecistus*), Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*), Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and also a good deal of Madder (*Rubia peregrina*).

The plateau wood is mainly Pedunculate oak with a thick calcicole shrub layer including Privet, Spindle, Dogwood and Guelder-rose. There is also a small area of Hornbeam and some English Elm. Since 1957, small areas of oak have been felled and replanted with various conifers and many of these are inter-planted with Beech. It was interesting to find Brookweed (*Samolus valerandi*) in the deeper water filled ruts along the rides.

The Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*) was well in flower and there were numerous plants of the Greater Butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*). Mrs. Hallam also discovered a small group of Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*). Conditions in the reserve were very dry and Mrs. Appleyard could only report a poor and depauperate bryophyte flora consisting of 37 Mosses and 5 Liverworts.

MINEHEAD WARREN, 17th June (Leader H. W. Boon)

A small party explored the coast at Minehead Warren, with its highly specialised flora. Walking westward from Dunster Beach, the sandy turf was brightened by clumps of Viper's Bugloss, Wild Clary and a species of Evening Primrose (*Oenothera stricta*), together with Hound's-tongue and Hare's-foot Trefoil. *Montia perfoliata* was spotted growing in a thicket near the shore.

Along by the golf course members were delighted to find the rare Striated Catchfly (*Silene conica*) persisting quite healthily in patches, in spite of much trampling. A colony of Field Mouse-ear Chickweed (*Cerastium arvense*) was seen on a grassy bank.

Further westward, on the sand dunes, some robust and handsome Storkbills with white flowers, believed to be *Erodium glutinosum*, were found. Here the Bur Chervil (*Anthriscus caucalis*) was also noted.

Later, an area of saltmarsh east of Dunster Beach was visited. Here, there was a very different flora, largely dominated by mud rush (*Juncus gerardii*) and Tuberous Foxtail Grass (*Alopecurus bulbosus*) and including Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*) Sand-spurrey (*Spergularia marina*) and Reflexed Saltmarsh Grass (*Puccinellia distans*).

SOMERSET NATURAL HISTORY

RECORDERS' NOTES

BOTANY 1972

The name of each species is preceded by its number in J. E. Dandy, *List of British Vascular Plants* (1958), and the nomenclature used in this list, as amended by Dandy, *Watsonia* 7 (3), 157-178 (1969), has been adopted. Following the locality is the number of the ten-kilometre National Grid square. The bracketed numbers refer to the ten districts into which Somerset was divided by R. P. Murray, *Flora of Somerset* (1896). District and vice-county records are marked * and aliens †.

Contributors of records are identified by their initials:

J.A.	Mrs. J. Appleyard	S.C.H.	Mrs. S.C. Holland
H.W.B.	H.W. Boon	J.G.K.	J. G. Keylock
J.V.C.	J. V. Carrington	R.G.B.R.	Capt. R.G.B. Roe
C.J.C.	C. J. Cornell	D.S.	D. Seaman
C.J.G.	Miss C. J. Giddens		

- 46/7 **Ranunculus sardous** Crantz
vc 5 (2) Frequent in damp meadow, Stolford, Stogursey, ST24. H.W.B. and R.G.B.R.
- 46/9 **Ranunculus parviflorus** L.
vc 6 (5) Dundon Hill, Compton Dundon, ST43. C.J.C.
- 48/1 **Myosurus minimus** L.
vc 5 (3) Three separate sites on West Sedgemoor, ST32. J.G.K. and D.S. First recorded for this area by W. Watson, 1920.
- 57/2 **Ceratophyllum submersum** L.
vc 6 (9) Rhine between Brea and Berrow, ST35. J.A.
- 65/3 **Corydalis claviculata** (L.) DC.
vc 5 (3) Wood near Gotton, West Monkton, ST22. J.V.C. This is probably W. D. Miller's station (in E. S. Marshall, *Suppl.*, 11, (1914)).
- 79/2 **Lepidium campestre** (L.) R.Br.
vc 5 (3) Disturbed ground Stoke Hill, Stoke St. Mary, ST22. J.V.C.
- 88/5 **Cochlearia danica** L.
Blue Anchor, ST04. J.V.C.
- 102/3 **Rorippa sylvestris** (L.)
vc 5 (3) Side of R. Tone between Obridge and Bathpool, ST22. J.V.C.

- 105/1 **Erysimum cheiranthoides** L.
vc 5 (2) In *Brassica* crop above Aisholt Combe, ST13. H.W.B.; (4) Sides of rhines West Moor, Kingsbury Episcopi, ST42, J.G.K.
- 131/2 **Cerastium arvense** L.
vc 5* (2*) Minehead Warren, SS94. J.V.C. *conf.* R.G.B.R.
- 132/1 **Myosoton aquaticum** (L.) Moench
vc 5 (2) Waste ground SW of Minehead Golf Course, SS94. S.C.H.
- 136/9 **Sagina subulata** (Sw.) C. Presl
vc 5 (2) A few plants by track, Withycombe Hill, ST04; many plants, floor of old quarry, Halsway Combe, ST13. H.W.B.
- 149/2 **Montia perfoliata** (Willd.) Howell
vc 5 (2) Dunster Beach, SS94. J.V.C. Noted for Alcombe in 1960.
- 168/2 **Geranium rotundifolium** L.
vc 6 (10) Dean, West Cranmore, ST64. J.A.
- 168/14 **Geranium pusillum** L.
vc 5 (3) Hedge, Nynehead, ST12. H.W.B.
- 169/2 **Erodium cicutarium** (L.) L'Hérit.
vc 5 (3) In *Brassica* crop, Lydeard St. Lawrence, ST13. H.W.B.
- 192/5 **Trifolium squamosum** L.
Spreading luxuriantly on new sea bank, N. end of Combwich Common, ST24. H.W.B.
- 192/9 **Trifolium arvense** L.
vc 5 (2) Near Lower Marsh Farm, Dunster, SS94, J.V.C.
- 192/24 **Trifolium micranthum** Viv.
vc 5 (4) Garden weed, Crewkerne ST40. J.G.K.
- 207/1 **Lathyrus aphaca** L.
vc 5 (3) Bank, Ash, Thornfalcon, ST22. J.V.C.
- 207/6 **Lathyrus sylvestris** L.
vc 5 (2) Top of cliff E. of Blue Anchor, ST04. J.V.C. Known from this area for over 100 years.
- 212/11 **Potentilla tabernaemontani** Aschers.
vc 6 (9) Rocky outcrop, Redhill, Wrington, ST56. J.A.
- 242/2 **Chrysosplenium alternifolium** L.
vc 5 (3) Cannington Brook, near Charlinch, ST23. Probably Murray's station. H.W.B. Murray cites J. C. Collins in H. C. Watson, *New Botanists Guide* II, (1837).
- 256/2 †**Oenothera erythrosepala** Borbás
vc 6 (9*) Waste ground, Eastertown, Lympsham, ST35. J.A.
- 256/4 †**Oenothera parviflora** L.
vc 6* (8*) Waste ground, Highbridge Station, ST34. J.A.
- 256/ †**Oenothera rubricaulis** Klebahn
vc 5* (5*) Railway bank near Somerton, ST42. J.G.K.
- 259/1 **Mysiophyllum verticillatum** L.
vc 5 (4*) Plentiful in rhines, West Moor, Kingsbury Episcopi, ST42. J.G.K.
- 262/6 **Callitriche truncata** Guss.
vc 5 (4*) River Ile, Ile Brewers, ST32. J.G.K. *det.* R. D. Meikle.
- 274/1 **Anthriscus caucalis** Bieb.
vc 5 (2) Several plants on waste land behind Minehead Warren, SS94. H.W.B. Recorded for Minehead Warren by Murray.
- 286/2 **Petroselinum segetum** (L.) Koch
vc 5 (3) Roadsides East Lyng, ST32. J.G.K.; (5) Plentiful on side of cornfield near Somerton, ST42. J.G.K. There is a specimen in the County Herbarium collected from this area by A. Gapper in 1822.
- 296/1 **Sium latifolium** L.
vc 6 (8) Many plants in rhine, Chilton Moor, ST34. H.W.B.
- 325/17 **Rumex palustris** Sm.
vc 5 (3) One plant by roadside, Hawkridge Reservoir, Spaxton, ST23, ? a casual. H.W.B.

- 374/1 *Samolus valerandi* L.
vc 5 (3) Edge of pond, West Hatch, ST22. J.V.C.
- 397/1 *Lycopus arvensis* L.
vc 5 (3) In *Brassica* crop, Lydeard St. Lawrence, ST13. H.W.B.
- 401/2 *Lithospermum officinale* L.
vc 5 (3) Hedgerow, Stoke Hill, Stoke St. Mary, ST22, formerly the edge of a wood.
J.V.C.
- 407/3 *Cuscuta epithymum* (L.) L.
vc 5 (3) Thurlbear, ST22, on *Poterium sanguisorba*. J.V.C. Found here on same species by W. Watson, 1921.
- 422/1 *Kickxia spuria* (L.) Dumort.
vc 5 (3) Plentiful in arable field, Thurlbear, ST22. J.V.C.
- 430/3 *Veronica catenata* Pennell
vc 5 (3*) West Moor, North Curry, ST22. J.V.C. Records of this species from Districts other than (3) and (4) needed.
- 448/1 *Thymus pulegioides* L.
vc 6 (9) Field near Redhill, Wrington, ST46. J.A.
- 454/1 †*Melissa officinalis* L.
vc 5 (3) Hedgerows, Stoke Hill, Stoke St. Mary and West Hatch, ST22. J.V.C.
- 455/4 *Salvia horminoides* Pourr.
vc 5 (2) Minehead Warren, SS94. J.V.C. Recorded from here by Murray.
- 506/4 *Senecio squalidus* L.
vc 5 (3) Railway line S. of Stathe, Stoke St. Gregory, ST32. J.G.K.
- 533/1 *Chrysanthemum segetum* L.
vc 5 (3) Many plants, Bridgwater Docks, ST33. H.W.B.
- 554/2 †*Lactuca virosa* L.
vc 5 (2*) Former railway goods yard, Watchet, ST04, seen in 1970, 1971 and 1972.
C.J.G.
vc 6 (8*) Highbridge Station and by Town Hall, Highbridge, ST34. J.A.
- 558/164 *Hieracium lachenalii* C.C.Gmel.
vc 6 (10*) Old wall, Chilcompton, ST65. J.A.
- 563/2 *Alisma lanceolata* With.
vc 5 (3) Rhines, Stathe, Stoke St. Gregory, ST32. J.G.K.
- 566/1 *Butomus umbellatus* L.
vc 5 (3) R. Tone, between Obridge and Bathpool, ST22. J.V.C.
- 577/9 *Potamogeton perfoliatus* L.
vc 5 (3) Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, North Newton, ST30. J.G.K. *conf.* J. E. Dandy.
- 577/13 *Potamogeton pusillus* L.
vc 5 (3) Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, North Newton, ST30. J.G.K. *conf.* J. E. Dandy.
- 577/15 *Potamogeton berchtoldii* Fieb.
vc 5 (4*) West Moor, Kingsbury Episcopi, ST42. J.G.K. *conf.* J. E. Dandy.
- 577/16 *Potamogeton trichoides* Cam. & Schlecht.
vc 5* (3*) Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, ST33, West Sedgemoor, ST32, Stathe, ST32; (4*) West Moor, Kingsbury Episcopi, ST42. J.G.K. *conf.* J. E. Dandy,
vc 6 (5*) Aller Moor, ST32. J.G.K. *conf.* J. E. Dandy.
- 578/1 *Groenlandia densa* (L.) Fourr.
vc 6 (5) Aller Moor, ST32. J.G.K. *conf.* J. E. Dandy.
- 625/2 *Epipactis helleborine* (L.) Crantz
vc 5 (3) About 75 plants, forestry track, Kingscliffe, North Petherton, ST23.
H.W.B.
- 629/1 *Neottia nidus-avis* (L.) Rich.
vc 5 (2) In wood, Blue Anchor, ST04. J.V.C.
- 655/3 *Scirpus maritimus* L.
vc 5 (3) One patch, West Moor, North Curry, ST22. J.V.C.
- 655/9 *Scirpus tabernaemontani* C.C.Gmel.
vc 5 (2) Marshes S. of Golf Course, Minehead, SS94. J.V.C.

- 663/15 *Carex pseudocyperus* L.
vc 5 (3) Hamp Brook, Bridgwater, ST23. J.V.C.
- 663/36 *Carex caryophylla* Latourr.
vc 5 (4) Plentiful, Crewkerne Tunnel, ST40. J.G.K.
- 672/3 *Vulpia myuros* (L.) C.C.Gmel.
vc 5 (4) Garden weed, Crewkerne, ST40. J.G.K.
- 674/2 *Catapodium marinum* (L.) C.E.Hubbard
vc 5 (2) Between Hurlstone Point and Bossington Beach, SS84. S.C.H.
- 677/1 *Catabrosa aquatica* (L.) Beauv.
vc 5 (3) Many plants in stream, Lower Vexford, Stogumber, ST13. H.W.B.
- 690/1 *Gaudinia fragilis* (L.) Beauv.
vc 5 (4) Hardington Mandeville, ST51, about one mile from original site (*Report* 1970). J.G.K.

CHAROPHYTA

- Chara vulgaris* L.
vc 5 (3) Rhines near Bridgwater-Taunton Canal, ST33. J.G.K.
- Chara delicatula* Ag.
vc 5 (3) Rhines near Bridgwater-Taunton Canal, ST33. J.G.K.

A. D. HALLAM
Recorder.

FUNGI OF DOMMETT WOOD, (ST277145)

This wood is situated on the steep, north-facing slope of the Blackdown Hills. The bulk of the slope consists of the greeny-yellow Upper Greensand with mature beech. Below the Greensand lies a very heavy yellowish marl completely impervious to water and this causes springs to arise at the junction of the two layers. This area has developed a typical alder-birch-sphagnum complex with such plants as *Equisetum telmateia* and *Viola palustris*.

The autumn foray of the Society was held at Dommett and this and a subsequent visit with Miss Margaret Holden made this report possible. Thanks are also due to Dr. D. Reid of Kew who identified some of the specimens.

The nomenclature follows that of the "Check-list" for Agarics and Pegler's "The Polypores".

HOMOBASIDIOMYCETES

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Amanita citrina</i> | <i>Wetter places</i> |
| <i>Amanita fulva</i> | <i>Under Birch</i> |
| <i>Amanita muscaria</i> | <i>A few specimens under Birch</i> |
| <i>Amanita vaginata</i> | |
| <i>Armillaria mellea</i> | |
| <i>Boletus badius</i> | |
| <i>Boletus chrysenteron</i> | |
| <i>Boletus edulis</i> | |
| <i>Boletus parasiticus</i> | <i>A small number on Scleroderma aurantium</i> |
| <i>Boletus scaber</i> | <i>Under Birch</i> |
| <i>Cantherellus cibarius</i> | |
| † <i>Cantherellus tubaeformis</i> | <i>Abundant on wet mossy banks of old field boundaries in the wood</i> |
| <i>Clitocybe clavipes</i> | |
| <i>Clitocybe geotropa</i> | |
| <i>Clitocybe lanzei</i> | |
| <i>Clitocybe nebularis</i> | |
| <i>Collybia butyracea</i> | |
| <i>Collybia dryophila</i> | <i>Abundant</i> |
| <i>Collybia maculata</i> | |
| <i>Collybia peronata</i> | |
| <i>Cortinarius armillatus</i> | |
| * <i>Cortinarius cinnabarinus</i> | <i>Determined M. Holden</i> |

<i>Cortinarius hinnuleus</i>	
*† <i>Cortinarius paleaceus</i>	Wetter places
<i>Cortinarius pseudosalor</i>	
<i>Cystoderma amianthinum</i>	
<i>Entoloma rhodopolium</i>	
<i>Galerina hypnorum</i>	
<i>Gymnopilus junonius</i>	
<i>Gymnopilus penetrans</i>	
<i>Inocybe geophylla</i>	
<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>	
<i>Laccaria amethystea</i>	Very common
<i>Laccaria laccata</i>	
<i>Lactarius blennius</i>	Very common under Beech
+ <i>Lactarius camphoratus</i>	
<i>Lactarius chrysorheus</i>	
<i>Lactarius quietus</i>	
<i>Lactarius subdulcis</i>	
+ <i>Lactarius tabidus</i>	Amongst the Sphagnum
+ <i>Lactarius vietus</i>	Under Birch
+ <i>Mycena cinerella</i>	
<i>Mycena epipterygia</i>	
<i>Mycena galericulata</i>	
<i>Mycena galopus</i>	
<i>Mycena haematopus</i>	
<i>Mycena inclinata</i>	
<i>Mycena sanguinolenta</i>	
<i>Oudemansiella mucida</i>	Growing on Beech in quantity
<i>Oudemansiella radicata</i>	A few under Beech
+ <i>Panellus serotinus</i>	
<i>Paxillus involutus</i>	Abundant especially under Birch
<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i>	
<i>Pluteus cervinus</i>	Common on decaying logs
<i>Psathyrella hydrophila</i>	Common on stumps
* <i>Russula albonigra</i>	Determined M. Holden
<i>Russula atropurpurea</i>	
<i>Russula claroflava</i>	A few specimens under Birch
<i>Russula fellea</i>	Under Beech
<i>Russula fragilis</i>	
<i>Russula mairei</i>	
<i>Russula nitida</i>	
<i>Russula ochroleuca</i>	Most abundant of the <i>Russula</i>
<i>Tricholoma ustale</i>	
<i>Tricholoma virgatum</i>	
<i>Calvatia excipuliforme</i>	Large troops near carpark
<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	
<i>Phallus impudicus</i>	
<i>Scleroderma aurantium</i>	Very common on bank in Beech area
<i>Bjerkandera adusta</i>	
<i>Clavulinopsis corniculata</i>	
<i>Coriolus versicolor</i>	
<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>	
<i>Ganoderma applanatum</i>	
<i>Hydnum repandum</i>	
<i>Lenzites betulina</i>	Old Birch stumps
<i>Phellinus ferreus</i>	
<i>Phlebia radiata</i>	

have seen the specimen and there seems no doubt that it is *ssp. britannicus* which only breeds in the Fens. The origin is open to speculation but it would appear to have been a release from someone who has been breeding the species. Mr. Boon reported seeing a White Admiral in Combe Wood, near Combe Florey, late in July. It thus seems that this butterfly may be continuing its spread westwards. About 30 years ago I saw it in the woods near Horner, but have not seen it so far west since then.

Light trapping, particularly at Selworthy, was somewhat disappointing owing to the persistence of cold nights through the summer. The average minimum night temperatures for the five months, May–Sept, was nearly 3 degrees Fahr. lower than the average of the last 5 years. June was very disappointing, July and August rather better, probably due to overspill from June moths, and September again very bad.

Amathes stigmatica (Square-spotted Clay), *Abraxas sylvata* (Clouded Magpie) and *Eremobia ochroleuca* (Dusky Sallow) were seen at Selworthy for the first time, the latter two being more usually associated with alkaline soils.

Aspitates ochrearia (Yellow Belle) also turned up at Selworthy, some distance from the Minehead Golf Course where it used to occur.

Drepana cultraria (Barred Hook-tip) was seen in August at Weston-super-Mare and Selworthy.

Eupithecia pigmaea (Marsh Pug) was reported from Shapwick by day in late May and early June.

Eupithecia haworthiata (Haworth's Pug) was seen at Selworthy in July and *Coenobia rufa* (Rufous Wainscot) in August.

Mr. I. Brassington reported the occurrence of *Cosmia diffinis* (White-spotted Pinion) from the Wellington district.

Lophopteryx cucullina (Maple Prominent), *Euxoa obelisca* (Square-spot Dart), *Diarsia dahlia* (Barred Chestnut) and *Lithophane leautieri* (Blair's Pinion) were all seen. They appear fairly regularly in the Minehead region but are very rare in the rest of the county.

Two members of the Pyralidae are worthy of mention. At Selworthy *Cryptoblabes bistriga* turned up for the first time and there were an unusual number of *Dioryctria abietella*.

I should like, also to put on record the occurrence in 1968 of the Pyralid *Pempelia dilutella* at Selworthy.

Dr. H. M. Chappel,
Recorder.

ODONATA 1973

The following are new 10-Kilometre square records:

Aeshna grandis ST53 One in Great Breach Wood photographed taking and eating a Comma butterfly. This is a scarce Somerset species. I. Lawrence

Coenagrion puella, *Ischura elegans* ST32 Plentiful R. Isle at Isle Abbots and North Drove rhyne.

Coenagrion pulchellom, *Libellula quadrimaculata* ST32 Plentiful North Drove rhyne.

J. G. Keylock.

REPORT OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SECTION FOR 1972

A good year for birds in the county was marred for the Section by the departure of Miss Eileen Palmer as Secretary. Miss Palmer had been Secretary since 1960 and her long and devoted service to the Section is much appreciated. The Section is very fortunate in that she has agreed to continue as Honorary Recorder.

Among the rarer species of birds recorded during the year were Crested Lark (a first record for Somerset), Sooty Shearwater, Night Heron, Ring-necked Duck, Osprey, Red Kite, Kentish Plover, Golden Oriole, and a number of Velvet Scoter, Spotted Crakes, Corncrakes, Temminck's Stints, Shore Larks, Tawny Pipits, Great Grey Shrikes, Aquatic Warblers, Firecrests and Bearded Tits.

For details of these records and an account of other species recorded in the county during the year, the reader is referred to the Section's Annual Report "Somerset Birds", available from the Hon. Secretary, A. J. Parsons, Barnfield, Tower Hill Road, Crewkerne, price 50p.

The Section held two lecture meetings and sixteen field meetings during the year. Despite the election of 52 new members, there was a slight drop in membership to 355.

THE SOMERSET TRUST FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

President: The Rt. Hon. The Earl Waldegrave, K.G.

Chairman: Ernest G. Neal, Ph.D., F.I.Biol.

The Trust has now been in existence for nine years, and I feel that this is an opportune moment both to look back and to look forward.

In the early years we were mainly concerned with laying down the foundations and getting ourselves organised. We spent much time recruiting members, making the necessary contacts with local government departments and organisations concerned with the countryside. We made a detailed survey, field by field, of most of the county in order to assess the ecological value of the various areas and to supply the County Planning Office with the necessary data which were relevant to planning decisions. At the same time we were gradually acquiring nature reserves and gaining experience in the problems of conservation.

Right from the start we have been blessed with a Council which has combined a very wide range of experience with a deep realisation of the need for conservation in Somerset. There was much to be done, and much was done, but all concerned were busy men and women — and they still are! We needed somebody who could give more time to the work. So the Trust took a big step forward when a full-time Reserves Officer was appointed — a step made possible through a generous grant from the Carnegie Trust. Mr. W. B. Collins accepted the post with enthusiasm, and thanks to a large extent to his energy and initiative the Trust quickly grew and was able to take on far greater responsibilities than previously.

At the time of Mr. Collins' tragic death the number of nature reserves acquired by the Trust had risen considerably and the four area committees were functioning well and taking over much more responsibility for their respective parts of the county. In consequence, conservation problems were dealt with far more effectively.

During the past year the work has been given further impetus by our new Conservation Officer, Mr. Guy Weller. He has put to excellent use his extensive understanding of ecological and conservation problems, shown real enthusiasm for the work and displayed admirable tact and good humour. A further significant event this year has been the recent appointment of Miss Elizabeth Eyden as a full-time Administrative Officer. The work of administration has greatly increased, and I am confident that Miss Eyden's appointment will greatly further the work of the Trust and at the same time take a little of the burden from some of the Trust's Officers who, without exception have put so much time, thought and energy into the work.

It has been clear to Council for some time that with full-time staff and growing responsibilities it was essential to have a Trust Office from which the work could be administered. Over the past year we have been very fortunate in being given the use of office accommodation at Somerset College of Agriculture and Horticulture. We are most grateful to the Principal, Mr. P. H. Keen and to the Somerset County Council for this facility which has proved invaluable. However, in the long term, it was felt that the Trust needed, not only office accommodation, but a Headquarters which members of the Trust could visit and enjoy and which the general public would come to recognise as the focal point of the Trust's work. In consequence, during recent months we have been negotiating with the National Trust for the lease of Fyne Court, Broomfield, and I am delighted to be able to say that this splendid estate will soon become the Trust's Headquarters.

Fyne Court is situated most strategically within five miles of both Taunton and Bridgwater in one of the most beautiful parts of the Quantocks. The main part of the house had been burnt down some years ago, but the remaining buildings will be extensively restored and converted for our use by the National Trust. This will provide us with excellent office accommodation, a display room, a council room and a hall for public meetings capable of holding at least 150 people.

Twenty-four acres of the surrounding estate which will also be leased to us include a more formal area with magnificent trees, shrubs and grassy slopes, and a wilder region of woodland well known for its carpet of snowdrops in early February. There is also a lake, which when restored, will add considerably to the attractiveness of the grounds. At one time this lake was the breeding ground for frogs and toads from over a wide area. Within the grounds there is great scope for the construction of walks of various lengths for the enjoyment of visitors to the Headquarters.

We are very grateful indeed to the National Trust for their most generous terms of lease and for their willing co-operation over restoring and converting the buildings in a manner best suited to our needs.

A management committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Mr. Martin Jacoby to plan and co-ordinate the work of equipping the buildings and managing the grounds. The latter are in need of considerable attention, but already we have received offers of regular help from parties of willing volunteers to cope with the manual work, and expert advice and supervision is available.

Members will be kept in touch with developments by way of the News Letters, but as far as can be seen at the time of writing, the buildings should be functional by the early spring. Already work has started on the grounds.

Ernest G. Neal

By courtesy of Somerset Trust Annual Report, 1973