

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF THE BRITISH ISLES

# WELSH BULLETIN

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*Osmunda regalis*

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This number of the Bulletin has been postponed for a month, waiting for reports which have still, alas, failed to materialize. The Editors cannot be expected to continue to produce the Bulletin without co-operation from other members.

The new price of 15p approved by the Welsh Regional Committee is scarcely surprising. It has been (1/-) 5p for the last 10 years, so the rises in postage alone would justify the increase.

EDITORIAL AND REPORT ON THE WELSH REGION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, LLYSFAZI COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, RUTHIN, 10/7/76.

Members enjoyed two fascinating talks: 'Wildlife Conservation at Home and Abroad' by Dr. William S. Lacey, and 'The Conservation of Unpopular Plants' by Dr. Jeffrey G. Duckett, both from University College of North Wales, Bangor. Summaries are published in this Bulletin.

At the A.G.M. it was announced that the Hon. General Secretary, Mr. M. Porter, had resigned after six years service. Thanks were expressed for his invaluable work during a lengthy term of office. The Secretaryship remained vacant for several weeks until the breach was filled by Mr. R.G. Ellis, Assistant Keeper in the Department of Botany, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, and B.S.B.I. Recorder for VC 41.

Following the election of other officers and members the composition of the Welsh Region Committee for 1976-77 is as follows:-

Chairman:	Mr. S.G. Harrison.
Vice-Chairman	Mr. G. Wynne
Secretary	Mr. R.G. Ellis
Minutes Secretary	Dr. J.G. Duckett

Senior Committee Members:	Dr. M.E. Gillham
	Mrs. D.E.M. Paish
	Mrs. P.A. Parr
	Mr. T.A.W. Davis

Junior Committee Members:	Mr. S.B. Evans
	Dr. W.S. Lacey
	Dr. Q.O.N. Kay
	Mrs. M.E.R. Perry

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1977.

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Plas Tan-y-bwlch, Maentwrog, Gwynedd on July 2nd 1977.

[Programme to be arranged]

July 3rd.

Field meeting in Maentwrog area  
Leader: to be arranged.

Welsh Region members requiring accommodation at Plas Tan-y-bwlch for Saturday July 2nd and/or Sunday July 3rd should book through the Hon. Sec. Gwynn Ellis, Department of Botany, National Museum of Wales, CARDIFF. CF1 3NP. as soon as possible, and before May 23rd.

Full details of the programme and field meeting will be available from the Hon. Sec. in February, 1977.

FIELD MEETINGS, 1977

1. Saturday May 21st (Not June 4th as in Field Meetings Programme).

St. Asaph area of Clwyd  
Leader: Mr. G. Wynne

2. Saturday Sept. 24th

Newport Rubbish Tip & Docks  
Leader: Mr. T.G. Evans

3. Saturday June 18th

Llangower district near Bala  
Leader: Mr. P.M. Benoit

Full details from Hon. Sec. address as above.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AT HOME AND ABROAD.

Dr. W. S. Lacey.

This was a talk about "People" as much as about "Plants" or "Wildlife", for conservation involves both Man and his environment.

Dr. Lacey is a palaeobotanist but he is also interested in conservation - "The quick as well as the dead". Having travelled extensively in Africa (1958, 1970, 1974), U.S.A. (1963-64), India (1964) and Australia (1973), as well as in Wales, he was able to give us the benefit of his thoughts and experiences over the last nearly twenty years.

Beautifully illustrated with colour slides of high quality, the talk began by showing the Zambesi River and the Kariba Dam, the indigenous Batonga people, then increasing access and facilities for visitors with the building of marinas and other recreational developments. In Natal, came the striking realization that views of National Parks, and visitors to them, showed whites only.

In the U.S.A. - a country rich in National Parks and other conservation areas, many with evocative names - the Painted Desert National Park, the Sequoia National Park. The latter provides protection for some of the largest trees in the world, Sequoiadendron giganteum and yet elsewhere the magnificent Sequoia sempervirens trees are not adequately protected, as shown in scenes of logging and its aftermath, north of San Francisco. Other tall trees are to be seen along a Nature Trail in the Olympic National Park - Douglas Firs up to 250 feet tall. Thence to the Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park, with extensive visitor facilities including marinas, before moving on to Australia, with its distinctive flora - Eucalypts and Acacias, Hibbertia and Callitris. Even here, the wide open spaces are invaded by camp sites and share-cropping has led to erosion in many places.

Returning home, where space is much more limited, peaceful views in north Wales are followed by scenes of road "improvements" near Dolgellau, in the Vale of Efestiniog and in Anglesey, the invasion of Morfa Bychan on a Whit Monday, caravan sites, etc., all emphasizing the increasing pressure of people. The establishment of nature reserves is obviously important but perhaps education is even more

important. Open days, guided walks, nature trails, projects for young people, interpretation centres in public places, all have a part to play in developing a wider understanding of what conservation is all about.

#### THE CONSERVATION OF UNPOPULAR PLANTS.

Dr. Jeffrey G. Duckett.

Conservation of specific plants is a highly immotive issue, some taxa perhaps receiving undue attention whilst others are somewhat neglected. In the former category, rare orchids such as Cypripedium and Epipogium, ferns like the Woodsias and Trichomanes and Saxifrages such as S. cernua and S. caespitosa immediately spring to mind. Apart from the interest inherent in their extreme rarity, their attractive appearance and situation in botanically interesting places add additional spice to botanical pilgrimages. Although just as rare but with none of the other attributes is Equisetum ramosissimum. On revisiting the only British locality in 1975 (a sordid business involving a trek through  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of rubbish tip) I found, to my horror, that the plant had been decimated by mowing. The fact that in 1968 the population bore several 1000 cones whilst protracted search in 1975 produced only 5, illustrates the extent of the damage. In contrast to the vigil kept on Cypripedium, apparently no other botanists were aware of the situation with E. ramosissimum simply because no-one visited the site in the interim. Now, happily, the question of mowing has been taken up and the plant should recover within a couple of years. However, the situation I have just described for the Boston horse-tail led me to wonder about other British Equiseta, particularly since the recurrent dry summers of 1975 and 1976 provided conditions especially favourable to hybridization in the genus. In Britain, Equisetum gametophytes occur abundantly during the summer months, on the mud of dried up lakes, ponds and reservoirs, where cross-fertilization (the gametophytes, in nature, are unisexual) occurs and abundant crops of new sporophytes are produced. Normally, these are destroyed by inundation the following autumn. In 1975, large gametophyte populations (E. arvense, E. fluviatile and E. palustre) were found in N. Wales and

Northern England. However, instead of the normal winter flooding, water levels remained low and the resulting sporophytes grew into mature colonies in 1976. Not only were these of the 3 parent species but in two instances hybrids (E. arvense x E. fluviatile on Anglesey and E. fluviatile x E. palustre in Yorkshire) were also found. The 2 latter were preserved by transplanting to the normal winter high water marks at their respective sites. Although it is tacitly assumed that hybrid pteridophytes arise independently in different localities, it is an extremely rare event to be able to pinpoint the exact time of origin and then preserve the new taxa.