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FOLKESTONE  
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
1955





## GENERAL NOTES

During the past year we have lost several good friends. Mr. Richard Moat, our Honorary Auditor since 1947, was a life member whose interest in the Society and cheerful personality will be greatly missed. Mr. J. White, our former Treasurer, died very soon after his resignation on account of ill health. Mr. P. Wood "that quiet and kindly man" came over from Dover to support loyally every one of the Society's activities. Mr. W. Copeland, a life member, served many times on the Committee until advancing years curtailed his energies. In addition to his keen interest in science, he possessed an encyclopaedic knowledge of tea rooms all over the county, so his advice was valuable when excursions were being planned. Another loss is Mr. R. V. Argyle, a former member until his resignation for health reasons, whose delightful local sketches were always much admired at the *Conversazione*.

Attendance at the lectures last session was consistently good. In view of modern methods of presenting scientific facts to the general public, it was thought advantageous to widen the range of subjects chosen for lectures and some of last season's were as follows :-

Power from Water, by Mr. R. G. T. Lane, B.Sc., M.I.C.E., Chief Engineer of the Owen Falls Dam ; The Whitstable Oyster Industry, by Mr. R. J. Money of the Whitstable Oyster Fishery Co., illustrated by some exceptionally lovely colour photographs of the coast ; Audubon's America, a film of American birds shown by Miss K. Tousey of Massachusetts ; and Kew Gardens in Colour, by the Curator, Mr. W. M. Campbell, N.D.H., F.I.P.A. (It is more than twenty-five years since Mr. Campbell and the Secretary went for their "Finals" to the R.H.S. Gardens, Wisley).

Perhaps the most enthralling occasion was the remarkable film of the construction of the Isle of Grain Oil Refinery, a stupendous undertaking, explained graphically by Mr. J. V. Jones. How satisfactory that this huge undertaking made use of worthless marshland instead of swallowing up good agricultural country !

The Society is very grateful to Mr. P. Coveney for his admirable pictorial posters which have attracted considerable attention.

Several members attended a Congress of Educational Societies held in January at University College, London, at which the S.E. Union of Scientific Societies was represented.

The highlight of the Summer Session was the holding in Folkestone of the 60th Annual Congress of the S.E. Union of Scientific Societies, an account of which appears elsewhere. In consequence of this event the annual *Conversazione* was not held.

The Flower Show's new site in Radnor Park was a great improvement. It was very satisfactory that the Society's exhibit was described as colourful since we were staged amongst brilliant hued greenhouse plants.

Lt.-Col. C. Duffield has resigned from the Secretaryship of the Entomological Section owing to pressure of work ; he is hoping to publish shortly a book on the ecology of his district. We welcome Mr. L. C. Bushby, F.R.E.S., F.Z.S., as the new Entomological Secretary.

Miss G. Meanwell's term of office as Botanical Secretary was terminated by ill-health and we accepted her resignation with regret. Mrs. D. Stanford, whose interest in wild plants is well known, is the new Secretary.

Mr. A. M. Morley visited Western Australia during the summer and brought back a number of specimens of Lepidoptera, which he has presented to the British Museum of Natural History.

At the last Council Meeting of the East Kent Federation of Women's Institutes, Miss D. Long proposed a resolution condemning the indiscriminate use of selective weed killers on roadside verges.

Mrs. Walton will be glad if members will report to her any cases of closure of rights of ways and bridle paths. Strong representations have resulted in the replacement of a footbridge over the canal near Aldington.

The Entomological and Ornithological Sections have experienced certain difficulties in arranging events and in attracting new supporters. It is a comparatively simple matter for the Botanical section to arrange a ramble for any number of people, but it is clearly impossible for some sections to conduct field work on a similar scale and it is hoped that their members will undertake as much individual field work as possible and publish their findings in the Transactions. It would be helpful if a Geological Section were started as it is possible for large parties to engage in field work of this character without detriment to the specimens.

The following suggestions for the better working of the sections were drawn up at a recent Committee Meeting :-

(1) The purpose of the sections is to be regarded as facilitating the exchange of views by specialists ; to encourage the publishing of the results of original research ; and to interest and assist beginners and non-specialists. (2) The sections should remain in their present form. (3) Efforts should be made to encourage interested beginners. (4) Field work should be regarded as an essential function. (5) As section audiences at the winter meetings are inevitably small, talks might profitably be given by members and friends from the neighbourhood rather than lecturers from a distance. (6) Arrangements should be considered whereby occasional talks could be arranged between the sections to further their co-ordination for the benefit of themselves and the Society.

THE SECRETARY.

# SOUTH-EASTERN UNION OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES

## 1955 CONGRESS AT FOLKESTONE

THE principal event of 1955 has been the 60th Annual Congress of the South Eastern Union of Scientific Societies held at Folkestone at the invitation of the Folkestone Borough Council on the suggestion of our Society. The Congress took place from the 14th to the 17th April mostly in brilliant weather and was attended by over 400 delegates of the Union's nearly 100 affiliated associations, including members of the Folkestone Natural History Society, a number of whom recall the 30th Annual Congress at Folkestone in 1925.

Sir Harold Spencer Jones, the Astronomer Royal, found it necessary to withdraw as President-Elect, as the Conference coincided with an official visit to the United States. The eminent radiologist, Dr. Russell J. Reynolds, C.B.E., M.B., consented to election as President. His Presidential Address at the Town Hall on the development of cineradiography was extremely well received. A Civic Reception by the Mayor of Folkestone, Commander C. E. Neate, R.N. (Retd.), was held at the Leas Cliff Hall when an outstanding Exhibition of undertakings of local and scientific interest was opened and later visited during the period of Congress by approximately 4,000 members of Congress and General Public. Meetings of Sections of the Union were held throughout the four days and local excursions, attended by 200 delegates, were arranged for each day.

Congress programme, accommodation, excursions and publicity arrangements were handled by a number of working committees of the Natural History Society, and the Congress H.Q. was established at the Education Office, 3, Shorncliffe Road. The 60th Annual Congress at Folkestone was undoubtedly a success due to the efforts of the members concerned and, as Mr. Frank Edwards the General Secretary, has since written, is likely to mark the renaissance of the South-Eastern Union of Scientific Societies.

V. C. BURNS.

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## OUR WEATHER IN FOLKESTONE

### OCTOBER, 1954 TO SEPTEMBER, 1955

IT is not surprising that with a climate such as ours we have an intense interest in its behaviour. More often criticising the present weather or attempting to forecast the future, it is a pleasant change to examine

the statistics of the immediate past (October, 1954 to September, 1955) and see what we in Folkestone have already enjoyed — or endured.

The statistical record reminds us of a relatively long-drawn and quite windy winter with temperatures, however, not exceptionally low — the minimum daily temperature recorded as 25°F on January 17th and against this was beset the 61°F measured on the 31st of that same month. Although snow fell on only 22 days, it delayed the arrival of Spring and the consequent transformation of our environment, physical and human.

A dry April (only two wet days !) then prefaced the type of Summer so long sought by the holidaymakers on the coast. With pleasant, and meteorologically protective, easterly winds, came the welcome sunshine, on all but 14 days in the four-month period from June to September. Some days recorded up to 15 hours of sunshine and there was a general high daily sunshine average while, during the same period of the 122 days only 35 recorded any rainfall (totalling 6.94 inches out of 30.01 inches for the whole 12 months). It became almost difficult to find suitable rational grounds for our national meteorological discontent — but there is always next year.

G. H. HONES.

*Our grateful thanks to the Folkestone Borough Engineer for the statistics on which the above article is firmly based.—Ed.*

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## THE WILD FLOWER EXHIBIT

AT the request of certain members of the Town Council, during the past summer an exhibit of wild flowers has been displayed at Cheriton Library, once a month, for a week ; it has been much appreciated especially by the school children. Much as we should like this to be a permanent weekly feature, the demands of the large exhibit at the Central Library does not permit of our giving more time to Cheriton. If any of our members could undertake the small Cheriton display regularly, it would be a great help, and they would earn the gratitude of the Town.

It has been brought to our notice that there is an impression that the Society indulges in the indiscriminate picking of rarities in order to maintain the wild flower exhibit. This is quite incorrect ; those responsible are careful never to touch rare plants where only a few exist. Some confusion has probably arisen over certain plants which are rare in other parts of England, but common in this part of Kent ; sometimes they are abundant, and friends will kindly bring us in specimens from other areas ; when this happens, and if the flowers are long lasting, we may have several spikes of Lady Orchid, for instance, on view at a time,

Far from condoning wholesale picking, every care is taken to preserve our treasures, and to discourage the picking and especially the digging up of uncommon plants. The only times when this has been done is when the plants in question are about to be obliterated by bulldozers or by the area being built over ; in these cases some plants have been transferred to gardens or on to private land where they have a chance of survival and increase ; the Motherwort was one of these.

At the same time we do not think that a hush-hush policy serves a useful purpose. Much damage can be done in ignorance, and when people are unfamiliar with the appearance of rare plants they may quite likely pick them because they are unaware of their rarity. Moreover, with so much more transport on remote country roads, it is by no means as easy as it was 30 years ago to keep secret the whereabouts of uncommon plants — especially when they choose to grow on the bus route. It has seemed to us that the best plan is to educate the public, and already we have had a good response, both among our members, and from farmers and landowners, whom we have found genuinely interested in the preservation of uncommon plants on their property. One farmer keeps a fierce dog on that part of the farm where a scarce orchid grows !

We have to chance the depredations of unscrupulous collectors, against whom there seems to be no remedy ; and far more dangerous than anything else is the threat of selective weedkillers ; protests against their indiscriminate use have been made and we hope will receive attention.

M. WALTON, F.R.H.S., F.Z.S.  
V. F. P. DAY, N.D.H., F.R.H.S.

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## BOTANICAL SECTION

THE Botanical Section is endeavouring to compile a list of local country names for familiar wild flowers and the Secretary would be pleased to receive any information of this nature for future publication.

The winter meetings, which are of an informal character, were well supported. These meetings are open to all members of the Society and we shall be very pleased if anyone engaged in observations of a particular subject will tell us about it. Sometimes a subject is more satisfactorily dealt with in an informal discussion or short talk to a small audience than as a full scale lecture to the whole Society. The subsections are intended for just such a purpose and it is hoped that more members will give us the benefit of their experience.

The botanical walks were very enjoyable and the earlier ones were well attended ; on two occasions relief buses were put on for our benefit.

At the first walk in April some fine specimens of Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria* were seen. Our warm thanks are due to Miss Elwin whose invitation to tea was much appreciated. In May and June, owing to the late Spring, only a few specimens of Lady Orchid *Orchis purpurea* were seen at Lynsore ; and the Clove Scented Broomrape *Orobanche caryophyllaceae* had not yet put in an appearance in the Warren. Mr. D. Wilberforce of Lydden, Dover, led the next walk through the woods near Ewell Minnis, when a number of interesting plants were found, including the Great Hairy Wood Rush *Luzula sylvatica*. In September a smaller party visited Raikes Hole to study chalk flora and afterwards Miss Long kindly invited us to tea. The October expedition to Saltwood was poorly attended in dull, foggy weather and had to be cut short owing to bad visibility.

An interesting point has been observed concerning the location of cowslips on the Downs around Folkestone. The plants seem to grow in profusion on the south-western and western slopes, but seem very sparse on the slopes facing in an easterly direction. It may be that the cold winds from the east tend to dry the soil and discourage germination of seed, whereas the south-west winds may assist in keeping the westerly slopes moist and therefore more receptive to seed — certainly these slopes would be warmer and sheltered.

Ragwort grew in profusion on the ridges of the Downs this summer, possibly due to the absence of rabbits, and the blaze of yellow bloom, seen from a distance, resembled gorse in bloom. Some farmers made an effort to pull up the masses of ragwort in their pastures, but in many meadows it was left to flower and scatter its seed, and the plant may well be an increased nuisance as a weed next summer.

There is one general point to which attention is drawn. Members sometimes bring friends on the walks who are very welcome to join us but may be unfamiliar with the district. It is urged that they should be asked not to gather wild flowers indiscriminately, as sometimes a rare specimen may be picked and the plant perhaps thus destroyed. One of the objects of the Society is to preserve wild flowers and especially rare varieties in their natural haunts, and the country walks in quest of these are intended, among other things, to note the location of wild flowers for record purposes.

D. G. STANDFORD.

## ENTOMOLOGICAL SECTION

THE Entomological Section retired into aestivation in March and woke up to resume its normal functions in September. Officially, therefore, there is nothing to report, but actually I find that the diapause was really very modified and that quite a lot of activity has been going on among the members in their different habitats.

1955 commenced with a bitterly cold and late winter, followed by a bright, cold April and a very wet, cold May. After the middle of June came a long, delightful summer in which heavy showers over a few days in each month preserved the verdure of the countryside. It followed two cold, wet summers in which, as regards the butterflies at any rate, opportunities for pairing and ovipositing were restricted. Consequently the season started badly and in most places butterflies were generally scarce. The second broods tended to stage a fair recovery and in the autumn some of the Vanessids were abundant and I was pleased to see the Small Copper, *Lycaena phlaeas* (L) on the local Michaelmas Daisies in the late autumn and common at Dungeness in October.

This is no place for a detailed survey, but it is worth recording that the Speckled Wood, *Pararge aegeria* (L), which reached Ashford from the West in 1949, is now generally, though thinly, distributed in the district and that a specimen was seen at the foot of the Downs at Folkestone in September.

The highlights of the season, however, were the capture of a fresh ♀ Camberwell Beauty, *Nymphalis antiopa* (L) by Mr. K. W. Self in a garden at Folkestone on August 24th and of a fine ♀ Apollo Butterfly, *Parnassius apollo* (L.) in the Warren on August 3rd by a schoolboy, P. L. Scott. This latter insect shows evidence that it had already paired. Its place of origin and mode of entry are likely to remain indeterminate. Races of *apollo* generally overlap and this specimen arrived without its locality label.

A colony of the White-letter Hairstreak, *Strymon w-album* (Knoch) was discovered near Folkestone by Mr. R. W. Fawthrop. This butterfly is notoriously secretive and may persist unsuspected in a neighbourhood for many years.

As regards migrants, there were several waves of invasion along the coast in early August, characterised by large numbers of 'Whites'—*Pieris brassicae* (L) and *P. rapae* (L) with a fair number of the Red Admiral, *Vanessa atalanta* (L) and the Painted Lady, *Vanessa cardui* (L). There were also a few Clouded Yellow, *Cochlias croceus* (Fourcr). I saw one of these migrations at Jury's Gap on August 7th, but *cardui* and *croceus* did not spread readily inland and the promise of a good 'Clouded Yellow' autumn did not materialise.

In dealing with the moths I restrict my remarks to two aspects : the behaviour of species which are recent additions to the British List, and the pattern of immigration, including special rarities.

*Euphyia luctuata* (Schiff.) is now common everywhere, a conspicuous and beautiful insect, except when at rest on a tree trunk. It flies freely in sunshine and reminds one of the Argent and Sable, *Eulype hastata* (L.).

*Calophasia lunula* (Hufn.) is very rare inland, but flourishes along the coast. Rumour relates that larvae have been found in Miss Day's garden. *Hydraecia huchearardi* Mabilie has had a really good flight on Romney Marsh where its food-plant, The Marsh Mallow, *Althaea officinalis*, adorns the sides of the dykes. The Tortrix *Cacoecia aeriferana* H-Sch. has been very scarce. *Adoxophyes orana* Fisch v Rosl. does not appear to be spreading, but threatens to become a menace to apple crops in some parts of mid-Kent. *Eulia formosana* Geyer is an occasional visitor here and is now well established over a great part of southern England. The three following moths are to be found in the Weald woods near Ham Street, but are not known to breed elsewhere in the British Isles. The Clifden Nonpareil, *Catocala fraxini* (L) and the Lunar Double Stripe, *Pseudophia lunaris* (Schiff.) were both scarce in their restricted haunts, but the Lesser Belle, *Madopa salicalis* Schiff. was unusually common. Another local insect, the Black-veined Moth *Scoria lineata* Scop. has formed a colony in a quarry near Great Chart, at least four miles from its station on the Wye Downs.

The pattern of migration has been unusual. In addition to the arrivals from N. France, aided in their crossing of the Channel by a S. or S.W. wind — e.g. *cardui atalanta*, *croceus*, the Humming-bird Hawk Moth, *Macroglossa stellatarum* (L), the Silver Y, *Plusia gamma* (L), The Gem *Percnoptilota fluviata* (Hubn.) and *Nomophila noctuella* Schiff. all of which have visited us during the summer in varying numbers, there has been another stream from Scandinavia or Denmark owing to the prolonged N.E. wind which was blowing in June and July. The appearance of the Scarce Silver Y, *Plusia interrogationis* (L) is a unique event which can hardly be explained in any other way. This moth was taken in some numbers in Essex and there have been three records in this district from Wye, Ham Street, and Westwell respectively. In this country an inhabitant of the northern moors, its larva feeds on heather and one can only hope that suitable sites such as at Hothfield may provide a home for some of the tourists.

The year has also been remarkable for the visits of the Bedstraw Hawk, *Deilephila galii* (Rott.). Many of these have been taken in the London district, but there are records from all over the country, two of which concern us — one from Folkestone and the other of a fresh ♀ taken in the Ham Street Woods in mid-August. The Convolvulus Hawk, *Sphinx convolvuli* (L) has been taken in singles and I know of

specimens from Canterbury, Wye and Folkestone. The rare *Plusia gutta* Guen. was taken by Mr. P. B. Wacher at Capt. Dudley Marsh's bungalow at Littlebourne on August 20th and another very great rarity, the Three-humped Prominent *Notodonta phoebe* (Sieb.) was found by Mr. Morley in his light trap on August 22nd.

The section is somewhat crippled by the loss of our late Secretary, but is strengthened by new members, including Mr. L. C. Bushby, who is well known to us all. It welcomes the return of Mr. A. M. Morley from his visit to Australia — a useful stimulus.

Excursions of the South London Entomological and Natural History Society to Faversham, Ham Street and Dungeness were attended by some of our members with profit and enjoyment.

This is the first year in which the area has been rabbit free, but it is too early to predict significant changes in the insect population.

I apologise for omissions in this report. Nomenclature of the moths is from South's well known book on the British Moths, for convenience of reference.

E. SCOTT, D.S.O.

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## ORNITHOLOGICAL SECTION'S RECORDS, 1955

THE ornithological news of the year, and of the century, was the successful rearing of seven young Bee-eaters in a sandpit "in South East England"—the exact locality may not be disclosed. I watched the six adults and seven young in flight over the area on September 5th, an event never before seen in the British Isles.

Six other bird visits are of more than ordinary interest. The Black-bellied Dipper arrived at Hythe on February 22nd in a blizzard and stayed a fortnight, providing the first authentic record for Kent. The White-winged Lark was seen with a flock of migrating Skylarks south of Camber on April 29th. Twelve of these birds have visited England and most of them have been seen in Sussex. The Black-winged Pratincole, seen at the Midrips on August 21st, is the ninth record for the country. The Pectoral Sandpiper was seen at the Midrips on September 6th and 7th. There are 55 previous records for England. The Buff-breasted Sandpiper was seen at the Midrips from September 18th until October 4th. There are 19 previous records for the British Isles. All the foregoing birds, with the exception of the White-winged Lark, were watched by many observers. I accept responsibility for the identification of the latter; I saw all the others as well. The Hoopoe,

seen at The Warren, Folkestone, during the fortnight ended November 12th, was photographed by the Honorary Secretary of this Section.

The first Swallows of the year arrived at Hythe on March 27th and six were seen over Station Road, Hythe, on November 25th. A House Martin was seen feeding young in a nest in High Street, Hythe, on October 16th.

Two great movements due to weather occurred during the year, the first on February 22nd and the second on October 22nd. Tens of thousands of birds were involved on each occasion.

W. S. NEVIN, M.B.O.U.

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## BOTANICAL NOTES, 1955

RECURRENT cold spells with falls of snow kept the vegetation backward in the early part of the year. The few pleasant sunny intervals were of too short duration to have much effect and growth was more or less static until the end of March.

However, the weather was beautifully sunny for the Congress of South Eastern Union of Scientific Societies and in spite of the late spring, we were able to collect some interesting plants for the Exhibition. Perhaps the most noticeable of these was Dr. Scott's large bowl of variations of the Sweet Violet *Viola odorata* showing a remarkable range of colours — violet, pale mauve, white, pink and buff. An unusual plant was a wild Hedgehog Holly found at Acrise. The Common Butterbur *Petasites hybridus* is a rarity in these parts, being found only in the Ashford district. From the same district, Dr. Scott brought the Setterwort *Helleborus foetidus* and a rare Cruciferous plant, *Thlaspi alliaceum*. The Great Water Horse Tail *Equisetum telmateia* though not uncommon, aroused a good deal of interest on account of its hygroscopic pollen.

There were a number of variations in primroses, specimens being found with frilled sepals, numerous umbels on elongated stems, like Polyanthus, and several with coloured flowers, mainly pink shades.

Orchids were late and not very numerous except for a few species.

During the dry spells the grass remained green and some unusual plants were found. These included the Large Wintergreen *Pyrola rotundifolia*, Geranium versicolor, Treacle Mustard, *Erysimum cheiranthoides* and Weasel Snout *Antirrhinum orontium* of which there are very few records for Kent.

Sloes were very scarce owing to late frosts and cold winds preventing fertilization by bees.

There is an old established stand of *T. flavrum* at Godmersham. We regret that through a misunderstanding the Lesser Meadow Rue *Thalictrum minus* was reported from Chartham in the 1954 *Transactions*.

*Arum maculatum* is curiously named as most plants have unspotted leaves and the inference is that formerly the proportion of spotted leaves was much greater. It has been noticed that the spotted leaves are considerably smaller than the unspotted which suggests that the spotting is an abnormal condition. This was confirmed when specimens with deeply indented spots were forwarded to Rothamsted. Mr. L. Balfour Browne, the Department of Botany Mycologist, reported that the leaves were infected with the fungus *Ascochyta ari* Died. which has elongated spores.

Several times last summer children have suffered from a severe skin rash after playing among the scrub on the chalk Downs near the sea and their parents have asked at the Library to see the plant responsible. The offender is the Wild Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* one of two yellow flowered Umbelliferae growing in chalk districts.

The Wild Parsnip is abundant on chalk cliffs and waste land, especially near the sea. It has stout rigid furrowed stems, the main stem terminating in a large umbel of bright yellow flowers with several short laterals beneath it. The leaves have rather coarsely cut leaflets and are pale green but often the down that covers them is sufficiently thick to give the plant a greyish appearance. The irritant hairs and acrid juice of this plant cause a peeling and blistering of the skin accompanied by intense irritation. In severe cases the blisters break leaving raw wounds which are slow to heal and may leave scars. A single stem held in a bunch of flowers is sufficient to affect the palm of the hand. Mr. John Sankey used to demonstrate to his students the blistering properties of the plant by rubbing a leaf gently on his forearm ; he says that he does so no longer since the last demonstration and that the effects can be seen by studying a photo of what happened on that occasion.

The other yellow Umbelliferae is the Fennel *Foeniculum vulgare*, which is harmless, being used to flavour fish sauce. It is not uncommon but rather local in its occurrence. It is taller than the Parsnip, growing up to 6 ft. in height, and has smooth shiny dark green branching stems, bearing many umbels of rather dark yellow flowers ; the finely cut feathery leaves smell of aniseed.

Like the Solanaceae, the family Umbelliferae provides some deadly poisons, such as Hemlock *Conium maculatum* and Water Dropwort *Oenanthe* as well as herbs for garnishing and flavouring, like Parsley and Caraway, and some of our most useful food plants such as Carrots,

Parsnips and Celery. The wild form of the last, found in ditches of brackish water, is extremely poisonous, the alkaloid has been removed by cultivation in the garden types.

V. F. P. DAY, N.D.H., F.R.H.S.

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## ELMS, GALLED PLANTAIN AND MONSTROSITIES

### Corky bark on Elms.

A Colony of 17 Elm saplings has been under observation. 5 saplings at the south end of the colony are 'corky'—6 at the north end are clear, and 'corkiness' seems to be starting round the branch junctions in the rest. This 'corky bark' has also been noted in the Field Maple and Guelder Rose. Old botanists gave the cork barked Elm a specific rank—*Ulmus suberosa*.

Bentham and Hooker mention a development of corky wings on adventitious branches, in varying degrees, but there is no suggestion that it may be due to disease. However, since the condition appears to be spreading to other species, it would seem to be infectious.

The Forestry Commission Research Station report that the condition would appear to be non-pathological; but they also stated that no work had been done on this phenomenon.

Galled Plantain was sent to Rothamsted Experimental Station, and the following report was received: "On the outside were 2 cocoons one of which has already produced a weevil (*Phytonomus arator* L.). This is a species in which the larvae are general feeders, living on the leaves of *Leguminosae*, *Polygonum*, *Lychnis*, *Silene*. They pupate in cocoons on the underside of the leaves and stalks. This weevil cannot be responsible for the malformation of the plantain flower heads and just happened to spin up on the heads. There is another beetle that is known to cause galls of plantain flower heads but there is no trace of it in the specimens you sent and the malformation is not the same as that of the beetle as figured by Swanton. Inside we found two Cecidomyid larvae of a predatory form. This lends support to the idea that the malformation might be due to mites, but we can find no trace of such animals. So quite frankly I cannot give you the cause of it with any certainty. I am very sorry."

The area will be kept under observation next year. The plantain 'heads' were enlarged to three times the normal growth.

The Summer of 1955 appeared to produce an unusual number of fasciations or monstrosities. This condition is fairly common in the Compositae — hydra-headed daisies are often to be found. The condition is less common in other Natural Orders. 31 examples were brought to the Museum, notably a specimen of Herb Robert, the whole plant as a fasciated stem  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ins. wide, the growth at the top giving the effect of a bouquet. A sprig of Woody Nightshade had three blossoms, the essential organs of six flowers being joined as twins. A specimen of *Orchis maculata* had flowers with no proper bib and a stalk of Hogweed had spread widely from what looked like a platform three feet up the stem.

Various suggestions have been put forward to account for what appears to be an increase in abnormality. Certainly the plants seem to be responding to the stimulus of some injury, whether chemical or mechanical.

M. WALTON, F.R.H.S., F.Z.S.

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## ZOSTERA MARINA

*Zostera*, commonly known as the eel-grass or grass-wrack belongs to one genus of flowering plants which live in the sea. It has thin, narrow brilliant green leaves growing from 1 ft. to 3 ft. long. It is a perennial grass and one of the few plants of which the flowers are pollinated under water. The underground stems or rhizomes live in the muddy sand and only the upper fringes of the beds are exposed at the lowest ebb tides. It needs some degree of shelter and is usually to be found in protected bays or estuaries. Many marine animals, and also ducks, geese and swans feed upon the *Zostera*. In the dried state, which one sees on the Baltic shore of Denmark, the grass looks like narrow strips of white paper. When dried, it is sometimes used commercially for filling mattresses, upholstering furniture and for packing glass.

*Zostera nana* is a small species of this genus. It occurs on muddy shores where it is freely exposed.

S. JOHNSON BIRD.

# BOTANICAL NOTES FROM THE ASHFORD DISTRICT

THE season has been remarkable in two ways. Firstly for being the first year of freedom from rabbits and secondly for the perfection of its summer after a cold spring and very wet May.

The local activity has consisted largely in the completion of cards for the Distribution Map Scheme. The filling in of these cards is an exacting task which ensures that the area in question is subjected to a very careful survey. As a result of this, little that is quite new has been discovered, but many new stations for known local species have been added.

I propose briefly to refer to two noticeable changes that have followed the clearing of the woodlands.

The first relates to the piece of woodland immediately west of the residual boggy field in Willesborough Lees. About ten acres of this woodland have been cleared, leaving the standards. The boggy field produces numbers of common sedges with, in a ditch, one or two plants of the White Sedge, *Carex curta* Good., a few patches of the Marsh Violet, *Viola palustris* L. and two or three of the Mountain Fern, *Thelypteris oreopteris* (Ehrh.). The cleared wood was intersected with runnels which, in June, were fringed and carpeted with hundreds of plants of the White Sedge and the Bulbous Rush, *Juncus bulbosus* L. Along a ditch were a few patches of the Marsh Violet and the Mountain Fern. This was a very pleasing sight for those of us who had come to think that *Carex curta* was decreasing and would soon disappear. There was a little *Calluna* and, further on in the thick wood, an area where the Star-of-Bethlehem, *Ornithogalum umbellatum* L. was growing among the bluebells.

The other area that I have in mind was a portion of the Warren Wood near Ashford. This undergoes serial coppicing. In a recently cleared portion in late May the tracks were in places covered with large patches of the Birdsfoot, *Ornithopus perpusillus* L. and the Trailing St. John's Wort, *Hypericum humifusum* L., and in August displayed large flowering colonies of Orpine, *Sedum telephium* L. In another area the rare Copse Bindweed, *Polygonum dumetorum* L. was luxuriating over the undergrowth and growing up the young trees to a height of twelve feet or more. These plants change their habitats locally according to the stage of succession. This wood produces many other interesting plants such as the Lily-of-the-Valley, *Convallaria majalis* L., the Small Teasel, *Dipsacus pilosus* L., the Hard Fern, *Blechnum spicant* (L.) and the delicate little Bristle Scirpus, *Isolepis setacea* R.Br.

There is a fair stretch of *Calluna* and, in one corner, Purple Moor Grass, *Molinia caerulea* (L.) Moench. and the Bell Heather, *Erica cinerea* L.

E. SCOTT, D.S.O.

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## THE BLACK REDSTART

ON Wednesday, April 13th, 1955, I was looking out into our small garden where miracles of bird life enact themselves daily, when I caught unusual, soft, gentle movements. A complete stranger, dark and dusky-coated was present. Light of build and movement, he about equalled in size the odd sparrows and goldfinches nearby. His thin beak stood out with a white triangle above and a shiny black choker beneath, his russet breast colouring continued below his wide oval body to well under his dark tail feathers. Keeping a horizontal stance he explored five clear points of the garden hopping on the daintiest pair of feet, then flew away westward towards a busy roadway. Familiars always leave in the other, well-wooded direction. Those, perhaps two minutes, left me breathless with surprise and summer enquiries gave me no real clues as to the bird's identity. Eventually, in Cassell's Concise Cyclopaedia, 1901, I found that I had seen a BLACK REDSTART.

In January, 1955, I thought a wood pigeon in the poulterer's shop looked interesting. I found in its crop 368 fresh, green, ivy berries with 3 in the gizzard. An easy shot for the sportsman.

A. L. WYBORN.

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## LATE NESTING OF THE GREAT TIT

### *Parus Major Newtoni*

WHILE on duty at the Skeete/Lyminge Pumping Station on October 21st, 1954, I noted a Male Great Tit taking nesting materials down the vent pipe of the tank outside the Pump house. Upon investigation I found a partly built nest which unfortunately I had to destroy as it was in the exhaust gas pipe taking away the fumes of the chlorine gas injected into the tank for purification. Witherby states breeding season begins April to June.

W. HILL, D.S.M.

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## FOREIGN SPIDERS IN FOLKESTONE

IN 1950 a large spider, obviously not British, was found in Folkestone not far from a fruit store. Last summer two similar spiders were found in the town, a male at Cheriton and a female in Sandgate Road. These have been submitted to the expert at the British Museum of Natural History who pronounced them to be *Heteropoda venatoria*, a species common in tropical and sub-tropical regions and now and again brought into this country with cargoes of bananas. Its bite is painful without being dangerous and the male is rarer than the female, possibly because, as happens with some spiders, the female eats the male. The two specimens are now in the Folkestone Museum.

A. M. MORLEY, O.B.E., M.A.

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## NATTERJACK (*Bufo Calamita*)

THE Natterjack *Bufo calamita* is a most interesting and fascinating little toad. I saw one for the first time on the Saltholm Island not far from Copenhagen. He was hiding in the grass and about to run away, for a Natterjack does not hop nor crawl.

He is smaller than the Common Toad and is recognised easily by the distinctive yellow line that runs along the centre of the head and back. The skin though warty is smooth and brownish green in colour. Both sexes are of about the same size, the maximum length of head and body being three inches.

The Natterjack which is common in S.W. Ireland and is found in England and Wales, breeds later than the common species, not beginning before the end of April. The chosen locality is advertised by the noise of the males, a loud trilling croak continued for a few seconds at a time and of sufficient power to be heard a mile away.

The Natterjack is mainly nocturnal but will often bask in the sun. In the Autumn the males hibernate first, sometimes climbing to the holes of Sand Martins.

S. JOHNSON BIRD.

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## A VIXEN'S LARDER

MRS. Lucock, of Denton, has given me the following account of a vixen's housekeeping :-

"About seven years ago, when we had a small farm and bred a few animals and birds, we were overrun with foxes, the reason being that they could jump the fence and so take sanctuary in the grounds of a nearby mental hospital. They even came in daylight, and on one occasion entered the laying ark run to get at the hens, who retreated to the laying house. The cock then fought the fox at the entrance, and made so much noise that we arrived in time to save the hens ; but the cock lost his life, his head being bitten off.

After that we sent for the hunt. They hunted across our fields, and to our surprise ran a fox to earth about two fields from the house, but informed us that they could do nothing further, as the warren was so extensive.

We then decided to dig the foxes out. The exits were stopped and finally a fox and vixen and six half-grown cubs were unearthed. The run was then dug right out, and off the main run was a side passage in which were found many bones, and also several chickens and three of our ducks, whole and in good condition. These had been taken three weeks before and seemed to have been stored for the use of the young family."

Does this throw any light on the indiscriminate killing by foxes of more than they can possibly eat ?

DOROTHY DAY, B.A. (HONS.).

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## BETHERSDEN MARBLE

THE Weald Clay, which constitutes the flatter regions of Kent, Surrey and Sussex, contains deposits of a hard fairly heavy concretion of limestone and the small shells of *Paludina* or pond snails, which are also found in the Jurassic and later formations.

It has been dug at Petworth in Sussex, Bethersden in Kent and other places for use as paving stones, or for building walls. Polished specimens are sometimes found in Churches and as mantelpieces in such mansions as Godinton. The closely grouped shells in section give a highly variegated appearance.

I recently visited Bethersden to see if any quarries were now visible, as the stone has not been dug for some years. Westward along the Wissenden road in the woods on the right some depressions were reported as sources. Tuesnod farm is north of Wissenden ; here the stone is seen in walls and steps, in pieces about three to six inches thick, dark and heavy with iron oxides. About half a mile north-east I found an enclosed piece of rough ground, in which were three pondlike depressions from which the stone had been taken, and I was also informed that in places it was only plough deep.

Across the fields to Stamford bridge over the Beult on the road south of Pluckley station, a field just to the south-west was pointed out as named " Quarry field " and here the stone was seen in the bridge and buildings, and with ragstone in the " Dering Arms " Hotel at Pluckley. I understand that it has not been dug locally for many years.

JOHN L. DUNK.

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## EXCURSIONS

**I**N the annals of the Society 1955 will rank as a record year.

During April the South Eastern Union of Scientific Societies held its sixtieth Congress in Folkestone and under the able guidance of our President, Mr. Birch, educational tours were planned for the afternoons. These started with a walk around Folkestone Parish Church, the Bayle and the Harbour with Dr. Esme Stuart as leader. Subsequently, Dr. E. Scott and Miss D. Long conducted botanists, entomologists and zoologists to explore Westwell, Hothfield and Little Chart ; geologists visited Warren Defence Works with Mr. Adams, the Chief Engineer, while archaeologists, inspired by Major Rand, explored Wye College, the Church and ancient occupation sites on the Downs ; Mr. Worssam directed geologists to the Stour Valley near Ashford to observe Hythe and Sandgate Beds at Great Chart, Folkestone Beds at Kennington and the Lower and Middle Chalk between Wye and Brabourne. Under the leadership of Dr. Francis Rose, botanists travelled to Saltwood to study the two Golden Saxifrages (*Chrysofplenium spp.*) ; to Romney Warren for grasses, clovers, etc. of sand dunes ; to Dungeness for early spring flowers and mosses of the coastal shingles.

Birds are easily frightened so only twenty ornithologists were invited to Dungeness Bird Observatory. To many, this was new ground and although birds were scarce, the region was interesting.

On the last afternoon one party visited the ruins of Studfall Castle, the Roman Fort of the Saxon Shore, also the fortified Manor House at Westenhanger, while a second walked around the Corporation Greenhouses to study propagation and development of young plants and thence to Kingsnorth Gardens.

Thoughts now centred on the Society's own excursions, the first being to Lullingstone in June. Sharp on time the coach left Kingsnorth Gardens and sped on to Wrotham, just beyond which, near the south escarpment of the North Downs, runs the Pilgrims' Way. Along this road manufactured goods — iron and woollen — were, during the 14th century, carted from Kent to the area of Salisbury Plain. We next reached Farningham where people have lived for centuries, as proved by Domesday Records of the old Mill and the Manor Houses, the latter being the home of Bligh of the Bounty. Eynsford was reached and we alighted before the 15th century mansion, Lullingstone Silk Farm, often called Lullingstone Castle.

This estate has been held by the same family since 1361. Here lived Sir John Peché, Constable of Dover Castle and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. On his death the estate passed to his sister Lady Percival Hart while, in the 18th century the last of the Harts married Sir Thomas Dyke. Names were united and present landowners are descendants of the Hart-Dykes.

In 1932, Zoë, Lady Hart Dyke, secured silkworm eggs from China, France and Turkey, and started a farm which today is flourishing. From room to room the visitors followed a guide, who explained all processes involved in the production of silk from the eggs to the hanks ready for use by the weavers, and said how the silk used for the Coronation Robes and Dress of the Queen Mother and also for those of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was made at Lullingstone.

There is no village but the Parish Church has stood for centuries. Within St. Botolph's is a fine Rood Screen, some 14th century glass, many interesting tombs and some excellent mediaeval brasses, while it is the only church in England with an altar frontal made of silk, spun by the silk worms of the Parish.

Roman remains found in the Park by Col. Meates and now exhibited to the public proved that here was formerly a Roman settlement, while discoveries of 1952 revealed the site of a very early Christian Church.

On the lawn during the summer of 1873 the first game of Lawn Tennis was played and the rules drafted by Sir William Hart Dyke, Julian Marshall and John Heathcote are the foundation of those used today.

Bedgebury Pinetum was chosen for our second excursion. Starting from Kingsnorth Gardens we drove to Tenterden, where in the 14th century woollen manufactures were started. The next place of interest was Goudhurst whose termination showed that this place was once the heart of the Saxon forest of Andredesleah, which was about 30 miles broad and stretched for 120 miles along the north of the Kingdom of the South Saxons. The forest provided wood for the furnaces while the discovery of iron in beds of Wadhurst Clay provided material to build up heavy industries. We now reached the estate of the Bedgeburry family and stretching before us lay the park surrounding their home. In 1424 the estate passed to the Culpepers while today the mansion is a school, and the park under the control of the Forestry Commissioners.

Members of the Society were welcomed by the Supervisor, Mr. Westall, who after a short talk on trees and the Pinetum, guided them through the most interesting part of the forest.

It was a very happy group of people who returned. They had seen the nursery in which young trees were reared for Kew, had journeyed through a world of plants and myriads of insects and gathered knowledge which gave food for thought on the homeward journey and after.

A. J. WRIGHT, F.R.G.S.



## RESIGNATIONS AND NEW MEMBERS

### RESIGNATIONS

Bushbridge, Mr.  
Codd, Miss.  
Fowler, Mrs.  
Hammond, Mr.  
Hughes, Miss.  
Preston, Mrs.  
Skinner, E. Miss.

### DECEASED

Argyle, Mr.  
Copeland, W. Mr.  
Moat, R. Mr.  
White, W. J., Mr.  
Wood, P. W., Mr.

### NEW MEMBERS

Brisley, E., Mr.  
30 Downs Road.  
Boyten, Misses  
"Rocquaine,"  
St. Leonards' Road, Hythe.  
Blaxland, Miss  
18, Kingsnorth Gardens.  
Bushby, F.R.E.S., F.Z.S., Mr.  
"Leaside,"  
Challock Lees, Ashford.  
Causer, Miss  
2 Naildown Road, Seabrook.  
Dane, Mr and Mrs.  
12, Wells Road.  
De Spon, Comdr. and Mrs.  
7, Cherry Garden Lane.  
Gilbert, Mr. and Mrs.  
Flat 2, 21, Grimston Grdns.  
Holmes, M., B.SC., Miss  
Brampton Down, Dixwell  
Road.  
Leakey, Mrs.  
Forge Cottage, Sellindge.

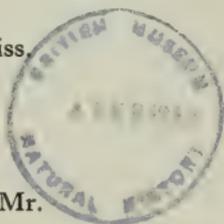
Lloyd, Mr. and Mrs.  
26, Manor Road.  
Riddell, A. J., Mr.  
36, Radnor Park West.  
Rix, Mrs.  
Grove House, Sellindge.  
Salter, Mrs.  
56, Surrenden Road.  
Sinclair, T., B.A., Miss  
Brampton Down,  
Dixwell Road.  
Stephens, Miss  
7, Ravenlea Road.  
Stringer, Mrs.  
37, Broadfield Road.  
Sharkey, Miss  
Holywell School.  
Swan, Mrs.  
The Green Patch,  
W. Hythe.  
Wacher, P. B., Mr.  
The Deanery, Chartham,  
nr. Canterbury.  
Wilberforce, Peter, Mr.  
Red Tiles, Lydden, Dover.

### CADETS

Leverson, Master  
84, Cheriton Road.  
Penticost, Master  
11, Cornwallis Avenue.  
Yorke, Harold, Master  
20 Cherry Garden Avenue

### AFFILIATED SCHOOLS

Brampton Down  
Dixwell Road.  
Ingles Manor  
Castle Hill Avenue.





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**Folkestone Natural History Society**  
(Founded April 4th, 1868)  
**1955**

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MISS VERA F. P. DAY, N.D.H., F.R.H.S.  
18, Wear Bay Crescent, Folkestone.

*Hon. Assistant Secretary :*

MISS A. J. WRIGHT, F.R.G.S.  
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